VICTORS OF THE WESTERN DESERT IN CONFERENCE

General Sir Archibald Wavell (right), Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, and Major-General R. N. O'Connor, Officer Commanding operations in the Western Desert, are here in conference before the final assault on Bardia on January 5, 1941. To their perfect planning and bold execution of the plans is due the fact that Sidi Barrani, Sollum, Bardia, "the bastion of Fascism," and the port of Tobruk were taken, together with over 100,000 prisoners, at the cost of only 1,900 casualties—a triumph unique in modern warfare.

Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

'Come Right On In, Pals, Tobruk is Yours!'

As already reported in an earlier page (see page 86), Tobruk was captured by the Army of the Nile on January 22, 1941. Below we describe its fall, and in pages 135–136 are accounts of the fighting as seen by eye-witnesses of the land, air and naval operations.

For thirteen days Tobruk had been completely cut off from the outside world. Within its perimeter, crowded in its forts and white-walled houses, were some 20,000 Italian troops—according to the Italian account, "one infantry division, the Sirte division, a battalion of frontier guards, a battalion of Blackshirts, and some detachments of sailors and artillery." On every day of those thirteen they expected the onslaught, as peering above their entrenchments and through the loopholes of their strong-points they saw the assembling of the British and Australian troops, the tanks rumbling up and the guns brought ever nearer.

All through the night of Monday, January 20 the British guns kept up a continuous fire, while bombers of the R.A.F. came over in an almost incessant stream and dropped on the doomed town their cargoes of death and destruction. Then at dawn on January 21 the men went over the top, preceded by a colossal box barrage dropped on Tobruk and its environs, the biggest of the war to date. According to an Italian account there were three divisions of Australian infantry, two armoured divisions of British tanks, two heavy artillery regiments, and a motorized formation of what were rather quaintly described as "dissident French troops."

First the Australian sappers ran across the desert and cut the wire which was spread so thickly in front of the Italian trenches; they also dealt with the minefields and put the booby traps out of action. Then the Australian infantry, who during the night had been brought up to within a thousand yards of the wire, sprang up and moved across the desert towards the enemy positions. Resistance was fierce in places and the Australians paid tribute in particular to some of the Italian machine-gunners and artillerymen who kept firing to the last and died at their posts. But, as in the previous battles, great masses of the enemy held up their hands as soon as the Australians drew near. In a few minutes long columns of prisoners were being marched away to the rear of the battle.

Shortly after the battle had begun the outer line of the Italian defences was stormed for a distance of several miles, and through the gap the British tanks and the motorized detachments spread out in all directions, taking in the rear those of the Italians who were still firing. The Italian guns were most active along the high ground on either side of the junction of the El Adem and Bardia-Tobruk roads, but soon the resistance was overcome, and the leading units of the Australians swept on north towards the town of Tobruk, while a second force mopped up the ground which had been won, and a third made steady progress along the coast. Then all their efforts were centred against the three forts, Pilastrino, Solario and Airente, which lay on the high ground west of the road to El Adem. All three were taken late in the afternoon. Solario was the first to fall, being carried by the Australians at the point of the bayonet; its fellows, seeing its fate, surrendered.

With the fall of these forts the inner defences had been breached, and as night fell the victors looked down on Tobruk, only some two miles away. A great and thick pall of smoke hung over the port as the oil reservoirs were afire; in the harbour a liner was ablaze from end to end, and the old warship, "San Giorgio," was also burning. Firing continued through the night, and at daybreak the advance was continued. The remaining resistance was speedily overcome, and the fort on top of the cliff overlooking the port was blown to pieces as a British shell hit the magazine. An advance guard of an Australian cavalry regiment dashed up in their Bren-gun carriers, broke down the steel and concrete barrier, and swept into the town, where a couple of bursts of machine-gun fire marked the end of the enemy resistance. At 10.15 a.m. the garrison surrendered; and as a Union Jack was not available at the moment, a "Digger's" hat was promptly hoisted on the flag pole as the signal of victory.

TOBRUK, with its fine sheltered harbour, and the adjacent countryside are shown in this contour map, the arrows on which indicate the line of the British advance. The perimeter defences and various strong points mentioned in the text are clearly marked, as well as the roads leading from Bardia and El Adem. Tobruk, capital of the district of Marmarica, had, in 1937, a population of 4,130. In 1939 the Italian residents numbered 822.

Specially modelled for THE WAR ILLUSTRATED, *by Felix Gardon*

One of the first to meet the Australians as they entered the town was one of their comrades who, a few days before, had been captured when he had lost his way in a car with a British corporal. "Come right on in, pals, the town's yours!" he shouted. He had been imprisoned in a cell in the military prison, but when the shelling got heavy the Italians took him to a large concrete shelter. There he did his best to undermine their morale by telling them it was simply useless to resist. Soon the Australians' approach reinforced his argument, and the role of captors and captured was reversed.

The streets of the town were almost empty when our troops entered, but there was an impressive little scene when the Brigadier received its surrender. In front of their staffs and a guard of Carabinieri, the Italian commanders stood at attention in full dress with medals—General della Mura, commander of the 61st Metropolitan Division, Admiral Vietina, commander of the naval base, and Major-General Barberis, commander of the garrison troops. The Admiral made a formal speech of surrender in English: "The town capitulates and all the troops are disarming"; to which the Brigadier replied, "Please delegate officers immediately to show the position of every minefield in the harbour and the town."

Only some 500 casualties were incurred by the British and Australians, while Italian prisoners alone numbered over 20,000.

There Was No Stopping the 'Aussies' in Libya

The storming of Bardia on January 5, 1941, resulted in few casualties to the attacking forces. Here Australian troops are crouching behind the parapet of an anti-tank ditch constructed by the Italians on the outskirts of the town. Shells can be seen bursting over Bardia itself.

BARDIA had been reduced almost to ruins, before the Australians entered, by the terrific bombardment to which it was subjected by the Navy, the R.A.F., and the big guns of the Army of the Nile. Above, Australian soldiers with fixed bayonets are advancing through the debris during the process of "mopping up" the town. Centre, the crew of one of the tanks that led the advance on Bardia give the photographer a cheery wave while taking part in the exercises that preceded the attack. Similar tanks with the infantry are seen in page 116. *Photos, British Official: Crown Copyright*

GENERAL WAVELL'S ARMY OF THE NILE swept swiftly forward to overwhelming victory because its leader had learnt and even improved upon the lessons which the Germans had taught in other theatres of war. Every detail and every contingency had been thought out and provided for, and the troops had rehearsed every phase of the battle. Some of the tanks that smashed the defences of Tobruk, with men of the Australian Imperial Forces following, are seen practising the part they were to play in the advance. The combination of light tanks and Australian troops, who, as Mr. Lloyd George remarked of their fathers "were marked out for the grim horror of heading assaults and plunging in wherever the fighting was fiercest," resulted in the fall of Bardia on January 5, 1941, and of Tobruk on January 22.

Photo Australian Official: Crown Copyright

Haile Selassie Is Back Again in Abyssinia

While the Army of the Nile was capturing one by one the Italians' strongholds in North Africa, General Wavell's men on other fronts, 2,000 miles to the south, were inflicting new blows on Italy's prestige and power. As told below, the armies of the British Commonwealth have taken the offensive against the Italians in Eritrea, Abyssinia and Somaliland.

AFTER five years of exile Haile Selassie, "Lion of Judah, King of the Kings of Ethiopia," crossed the frontier from the Sudan into his own country on January 15, 1941.

On a natural clearing in a dried river bed just within the frontier of Abyssinia a number of native chiefs and troops of the new Abyssinian Regular Army were drawn up to greet him. The sun was high in the heavens when shortly before 11 an R.A.F. 'plane was seen approaching, accompanied by an escort of two fighter machines. They came to land just behind a screen of trees, and then, preceeded by a tall officer of the British Guards, a little procession made its appearance. It was headed by Bishop Gabri Giorgio, and behind him came Haile Selassie and his two sons, the Crown Prince and the Duke of Harrar, and representatives of the British Army in the Sudan. As he stepped on to the parade ground, a British officer unrolled a scroll and read out the message of greeting. "A message to his Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie the First, from the Major-General commanding troops in the Sudan," he began.

The man who not so long ago had been carrying his shopping basket through the streets of Bath—who, more recently, had been referred to in Khartoum as "Mr. Smith" or the "little man"—had come home. Once again he was "his Imperial Majesty."

Upon returning to his country, the Emperor—or Negus, to use the Abyssinian term—issued a proclamation to his former subjects, calling upon them to rise against the Italian invader, and promising pardon to those who, during his absence, had been compelled to bow the knee to the enemy. "Italy is cornered by the grip of Great Britain," he went on, "by sea, air and land power. The Italians in Ethiopia will not escape my trusted warriors." Then he concluded with an expression of thanks to the Government and people of Great Britain, "for the touching and unforgettable reception and hospitality during my bitter trials. Long live Ethiopia! Long live Britain!"

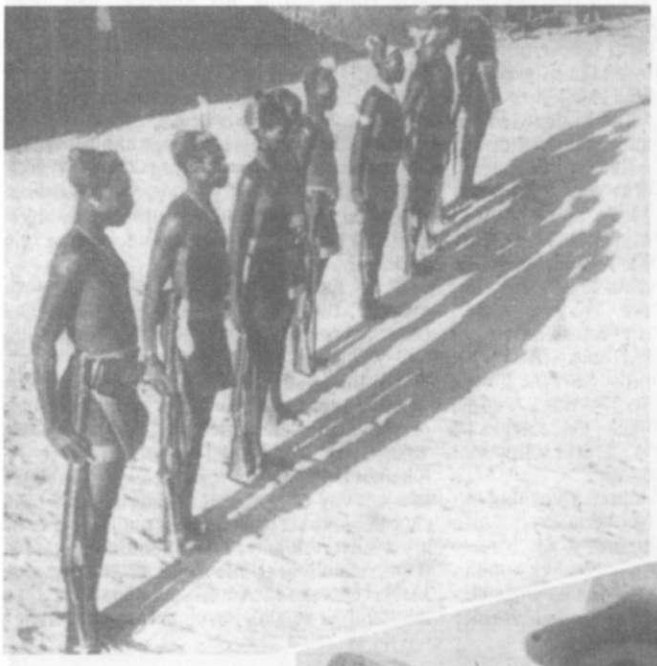
Then the Emperor reviewed his troops, men of that Abyssinian Army which has been in process of formation for months, and which reflects the greatest credit on the British and Australian officers and N.C.O.s who were entrusted with its training. Some of the men were described by the "Daily Telegraph's" special correspondent in Khartoum when he was present at the start of a convoy of arms, war materials and other supplies - not forgetting a quantity of the great silver dollars, freshly minted most of them, which bear the head of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and the date 1780, the dollars which have been Abyssinia's currency for 150 years—which was just setting out to cross the frontier into Abyssinia. "Irregulars, chin-bearded members of the Amhara tribe, with battered trilby hats or squat topees, heavy-featured dark Gallas, and light-skinned members of the Gumuz frontier tribe, were lined up into smiling ranks as if for a Sir Roger de Coverley. Behind them were the 'presents' yet unopened—rows of boxes of English and Italian ammunition. The men had already been given rifles, and they were now filing by to receive rounds of ammunition in canvas

ITALIAN EAST AFRICA, as this map shows, is being invaded on all sides. The arrows indicate the points at which British and Imperial troops are advancing from the Sudan and Kenya. *Courtesy of the "Daily Telegraph"*

SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE fighter 'planes on the Abyssinian frontier of Kenya, standing in readiness to take the air as soon as the enemy is sighted (left). Above is a Bren gun section of the South African forces at exercise in the same area. *Photos, Sport & General*

Italian East Africa Invaded

bandoliers and a green canvas satchel, about the size of a girl's large handbag, which is supposed to hold bullets or food. As each got his share he returned to his place in the ranks, gravely telling his comrades the number of rounds with his fingers. Only when he had assured himself that the number was correct did a new and beatific grin break over his face."



News of the Emperor's arrival spread like wildfire through the Abyssinian villages, and soon from every quarter the tribesmen were hastening to his standard. While the Italian empire in East Africa was being thus threatened from within to such a degree that it was soon reported that the Italian authorities were already making plans for the almost complete evacuation of Abyssinia, and the concentration of all their available forces in the uplands of Eritrea, the armies of the British Commonwealth were attacking on every side. Following the recapture of Kassala on January 18, British mobile detachments crossed the frontier into Eritrea, and within a few days were reported to have penetrated 100 miles inside Italy's original colony in East Africa. Biscia, the terminus of the railway to the Red Sea port of Massawa, was abandoned by the Italians with scarcely a fight, 100 prisoners being captured, and Agordat, 25 miles down the line, was threatened by the British advance. More than 1,100 prisoners were taken in these initial operations. In their swift advance British units pierced two Italian lines of resistance: one running from Keru to Aicota, and the other from Biscia to Barentu. Cairo's communiqué remarked that the difficult country afforded good opportunities for defence, but the enemy made little use of it.

As usual the R.A.F. was active, supporting very effectively the advance into Eritrea. The railway line and station at Biscia were heavily bombed and motor transport concentrated west of the town was attacked. Dive attacks were made on enemy fighter aircraft, motor transport vehicles, and the railway at Agordat. A number of fires were started at Umm Hagar, and the railway station at Keren was also bombed. A Rhodesian squadron dropped bombs near the bridge at Tellina and machine-gunned motor transport at Barentu.

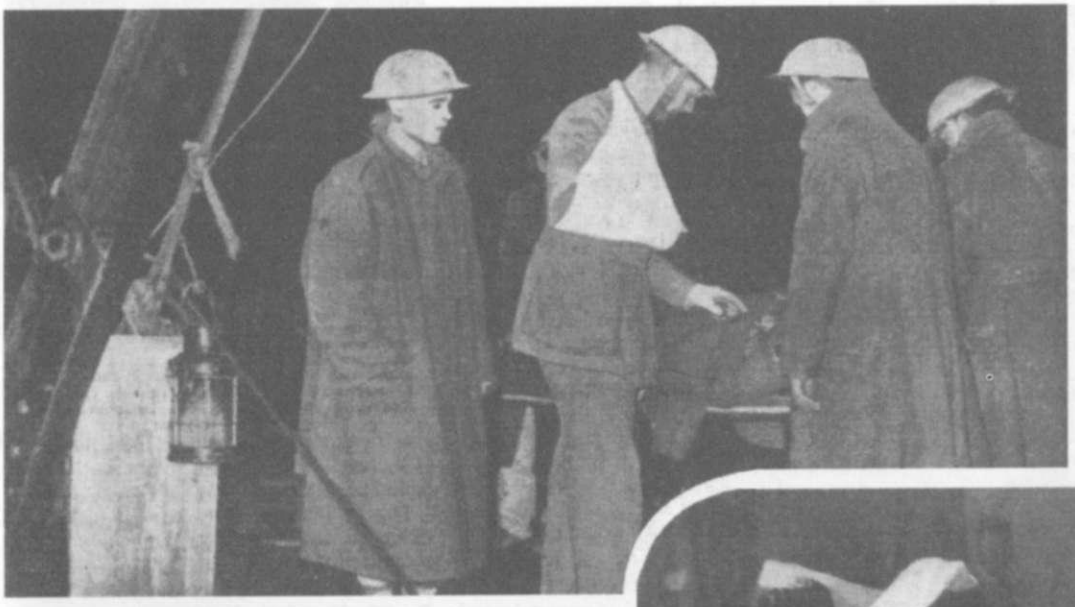
To the south the British Army continued steadily in the Metemma area, near the Sudan frontier. On the Kenya-Abyssinian border active patrolling was continued by South African troops, and two Italian outposts, at El Yibo and El Sardu, about 75 miles east of Lake Rudolf, were captured, and in encounters with "banda," as the native Italian troops are called, many prisoners were taken. Then another nibble off Mussolini's empire was made in Italian Somaliland, where British forward patrols were reported to have penetrated into hostile territory and to be continuing vigorously in all sectors to extend the area of their drive.

From west and south, then, Italian East Africa was being attacked, and nowhere did the Italians put up anything that might be described as a determined stand. As in the Western Desert far to the north, they seemed to have lost heart even before the battle began.

RAS KASSA, one of the Emperor of Abyssinia's most trusted generals. He is now back in his own country with Haile Selassie.
Photo, Central Press

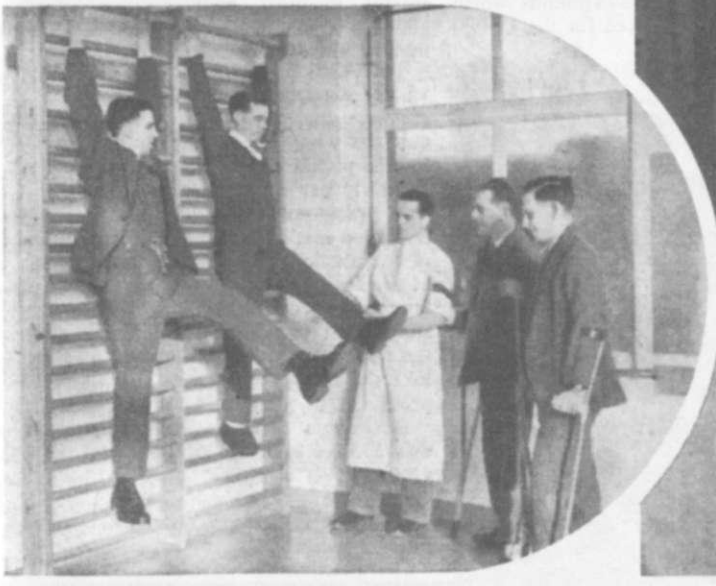
ABYSSINIANS who have gone over into Kenya to be trained by South African officers are seen in the top photograph; they have been given modern equipment with which to fight the Italians. Centre, the British C.O. of this Abyssinian unit. British headquarters, above, showing the hut where military conferences take place.
Photos, British Paramount News

Kind Hearts and Skilled Hands Help the Wounded



The great victories in North Africa have been accomplished with extraordinarily few casualties. Preparations had been made to deal with many more, and the wounded were speedily rushed off to hospital. Left, a Medical Officer, himself wounded, is supervising the evacuation of wounded from Sollum during an air raid. Convalescent soldiers, wounded in the taking of Gallabat on the Abyssinian frontier, are seen, below, at a hospital in the Sudan.

Photos, British Official: Crown Copyright



Casualties have been remarkably few in the Battle of Britain as well as on the two fronts in the Middle East. Most of the men who are now in hospital in Britain have sustained their injuries in the air. Centre left, a sergeant masseur is giving treatment to two airmen on Swedish bars. The staff of all the hospitals are bent on their patients having the best possible time, and the nurses at one hospital, above, found time to take part in snowball battles with convalescent men during the cold spell of January 1941.

Photos, Planet News

Australia's 'There' All Right!

Australia has set an example—a magnificent example—to the Commonwealth and the world of liberty-loving peoples. In this war as in the last she is giving of her best freely and without stint. Here we tell of some of the more striking features of her contribution to the Empire's effort.

"FREEDOM produces the best soldiers," said Mr. S. M. Bruce, Australia's one-time Prime Minister and present High Commissioner in London, in a broadcast on Australia Day, January 26. "In the Western Desert," he went on, "the Blackshirts of Fascism, trained for eighteen years in militarism and denuded of liberty of thought and expression, have crumpled before the men of Australia—a country where militarism is abhorred and where freedom is the very breath of life."

Although her total population is only some seven millions, the Australian Commonwealth has raised a great army. Even six months ago the number of men under arms in the Australian Home Defence Force was over 100,000, and it is planned to increase it to 210,000 by March 1941. More than 120,000 have volunteered for overseas service, and tens of thousands of the Australian Imperial Force have proceeded to the United Kingdom, to Egypt and Palestine, and, as the Italians have recently learnt to their cost, to the Western Desert. At Sidi Barrani, Bardia and Tobruk the Diggers of this generation have covered themselves with glory as did those of a generation ago on Gallipoli and the Somme.

Four members of an Australian air crew are seen in front of their 'plane before they set out on a reconnaissance flight.

Units of the Royal Australian Navy are operating in the Pacific, the Red Sea and in the Mediterranean; at the outbreak of war the R.A.N. had in commission 2 heavy cruisers, 4 other cruisers, 2 sloops, 5 destroyers and other smaller craft. For a year past a contraband control system has been operating from Australian ports so as to relieve the pressure on the British control bases elsewhere, and Australian ships have taken part in convoying the successive contingents of troops from "down under." Before the war the personnel of the Royal Australian Navy numbered 5,400; today it numbers over 15,000 men and is still growing.

The Royal Australian Air Force is on active service in the United Kingdom, Egypt, Palestine and Malaya. Enlistments for the R.A.A.F. and the Empire Air Training Scheme have been 125,000 and over 30,000 are already in training; the personnel of the R.A.A.F. has been nearly trebled, and by last autumn nearly 19,000 men were in training. An Australian squadron of the R.A.A.F. has been serving with the Coastal Command of the R.A.F. since December 1939. Then, as regards the Empire Air Training Scheme, Australia's War Cabinet decided that the total of recruits to March 1943 should be 57,473, comprising 14,300 pilots, 16,173 air crews and 27,000 ground personnel. The first of 36 training schools are now in operation, and of the aircraft actually required about one-third are being provided by the factories of the Commonwealth. The total expenditure on Australia's three years' air armament scheme is estimated at £80,000,000.

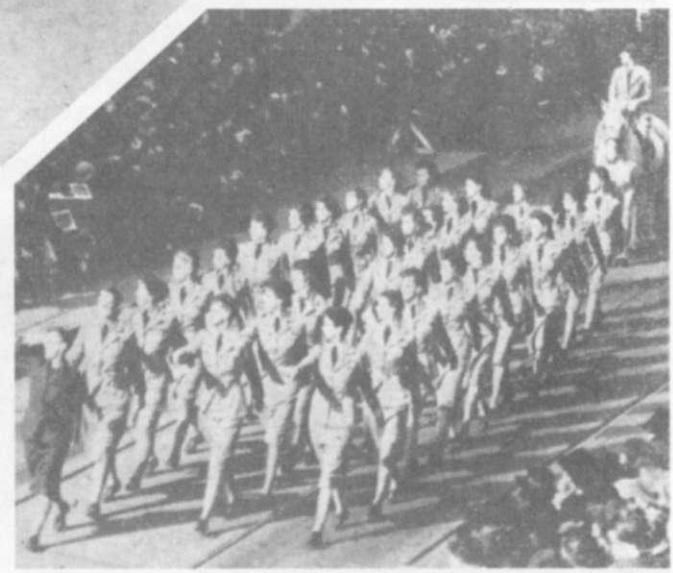
Practically all ammunition and armaments for the Australian forces are being made in Australia, and many millions of pounds' worth of orders have been executed for the United Kingdom Ministry of Supply and Admiralty. Recently the Commonwealth embarked on a vast programme for the production of £100,000,000 worth of munitions, which will ultimately involve the employment of 150,000 men and women. Australia is also concentrating on warship construction for the United Kingdom; every available shipyard is being brought into commission and new yards are being established, while a graving dock costing £3,000,000 is to be built at Sydney. The vessels under construction include 3 destroyers and 50 patrol craft.

The Australian ensign has a large seven-pointed star in the lower canton immediately beneath the Union. It was formerly six-pointed, to represent the six States of the Commonwealth; a seventh point was added when the Northern Territory came under Commonwealth administration. In the fly are five stars representing the Southern Cross.

During the next three years Australia has budgeted to spend £55,000,000 on aircraft construction and maintenance. During the present year it is planned to turn out one Bristol Beaufort bomber every day in addition to numbers of Wirraway second-line fighters and trainer 'planes.

The United Kingdom has bought the whole exportable surplus of Australia's copper, zinc, tungsten and tungsten ores, and the whole of the Australian wool clip for the period of the war and one year after at thirty per cent above the pre-war price. Vast purchases of lead, wheat and flour have also been made; and our Ministry of Food, in conjunction with Canada, made contracts at the beginning of the war with the Queensland sugar producers to buy all the available supplies at pre-war prices. Quite early in the war, too, the United Kingdom agreed to take the Dominion's entire surplus of dairy produce, eggs, meat and dried and canned fruit.

Australia's defence and war expenditure was £55,200,000 for 1939-40, and at least £100,000,000 is being spent on munitions alone in the financial year which is just ending. The money is being raised by taxation and internal loans.



Stacks of bombs, ready for filling, await the assembly of their fins (centre), as Australia's magnificent war effort steadily increases. Members of the Australian Women's Legion (above) march through Sydney's streets on their way to the city's Town Hall in a procession organized in aid of Red Cross war funds.

Photos, Australian Official, Sport & General, Central Press and Topical

Men from 'Down Under' are 'Top Dogs' at Sea

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY, though small, has spared every ship possible to assist the British Fleet. The personnel is highly trained. Gunnery practice is in progress on board this Australian warship in home waters. An Admiralty communiqué issued on January 22, 1941, dealing with the co-operation of the Mediterranean Fleet in the battles of the Libyan desert, said: "Units of the Royal Australian Navy have played a conspicuously successful part in these operations." *Photo, Keystone*

What are the Nazis up to in Sicily?

What with Wavell's tanks and Greek bayonets, Mussolini can have little hope nowadays of that second Roman Empire of which he has boasted so often. The war—*his* war—is less than a year old, but his troops have been defeated on every front, and now he has to submit to the crowning humiliation of appealing to his ally for assistance.

FIRST definite news of the arrival of Germans in Italy was given in an Order of the Day issued by General Pricolo, Chief of the Italian Air Staff, on January 2. "Detachments of the brave German Air Force," it read, "are at present being transferred to some of our bases to collaborate in the bitter air and, naval battle which is now going on in the Mediterranean." Since then more reports have come in telling of the arrival of quite a number of German soldiers and airmen in Italy, and Sicily in particular, would seem to have come under German control.

GERMAN AIRCRAFT, drafted into Italy and Sicily with a view to attacking our Mediterranean bases and Fleet from short range, have met with a warm reception both from our fighter aircraft and from our A.A. defences. This Heinkel may have "returned safely to its base," but the bullet holes tell their own story.

Why Sicily? it may be asked. Several reasons may be suggested, most of them obvious enough after a few minutes' study of the map. One, however, is independent of geography: Hitler, having become convinced in his own mind that Italy is about to crack and Mussolini about to crash, may be determined to seize all that he wants to seize in Italy before it is too late. In this case he would probably try to secure Trieste, the great port on the Adriatic which in the last war was the main outlet of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, and the island of Sicily. And this, indeed, is what he is doing, apparently, since not only Sicily but Trieste is reported to be virtually in Nazi hands.

Now let us look at Sicily's place on the map. It lies in the middle of the Mediterranean, dividing the great sea into two parts, a western and an eastern. Up to now, and still today, the Mediterranean is what it has been for centuries, a highway of British naval and commercial power. But if an enemy of Britain were to establish himself in Sicily, then that highway would be threatened—indeed commanded and perhaps completely blocked. Less than 300 miles away is Tripoli, in Italian North Africa; and the Sicilian Channel, which divides Sicily from Tunis, is only about 100 miles in width, and almost half-way is Pantelleria, the islet which Mussolini has converted into a miniature Gibraltar. Malta, Britain's naval stronghold, is only 60 miles from the Sicilian coast, and in theory, at least, it would seem to be at the mercy of the bombing 'planes of an enemy established only a few minutes' flying distance away.

With Sicily in their hands the Germans might well expect to use its many aerodromes and harbours as bases for their dive-bombers and U-boats operating against the hated British. It was from Sicily, indeed, that the Stukas took off on January 10 for their onslaught on the British Fleet, which resulted in the sinking of the "Southampton" and the damaging of the "Illustrious"; and it was a Sicilian aerodrome—at Catania—which was promptly bombed in retaliation by the R.A.F. From Sicilian aerodromes, too, we may be sure the Nazi 'planes are proceeding to bomb Malta. Many raids on the little island have been delivered since Italy entered the war last June, but of late weeks the air attacks have been greatly intensified. Malta, however, knows how to hit back; and in the raids delivered between January 15 and 19 at least 39 German dive-bombers were shot down.

If the Germans could secure air mastery over the central Mediterranean, if only for a week or two, then they might reinforce Graziani's hard-pressed troops with a strong stiffening of Nazis—hardened veterans of the battles of the Western Front—who might be expected to put up a far better show than Mussolini's Blackshirts and native levies. Graziani's fast-dwindling stores of food, water and petrol might also be replenished.

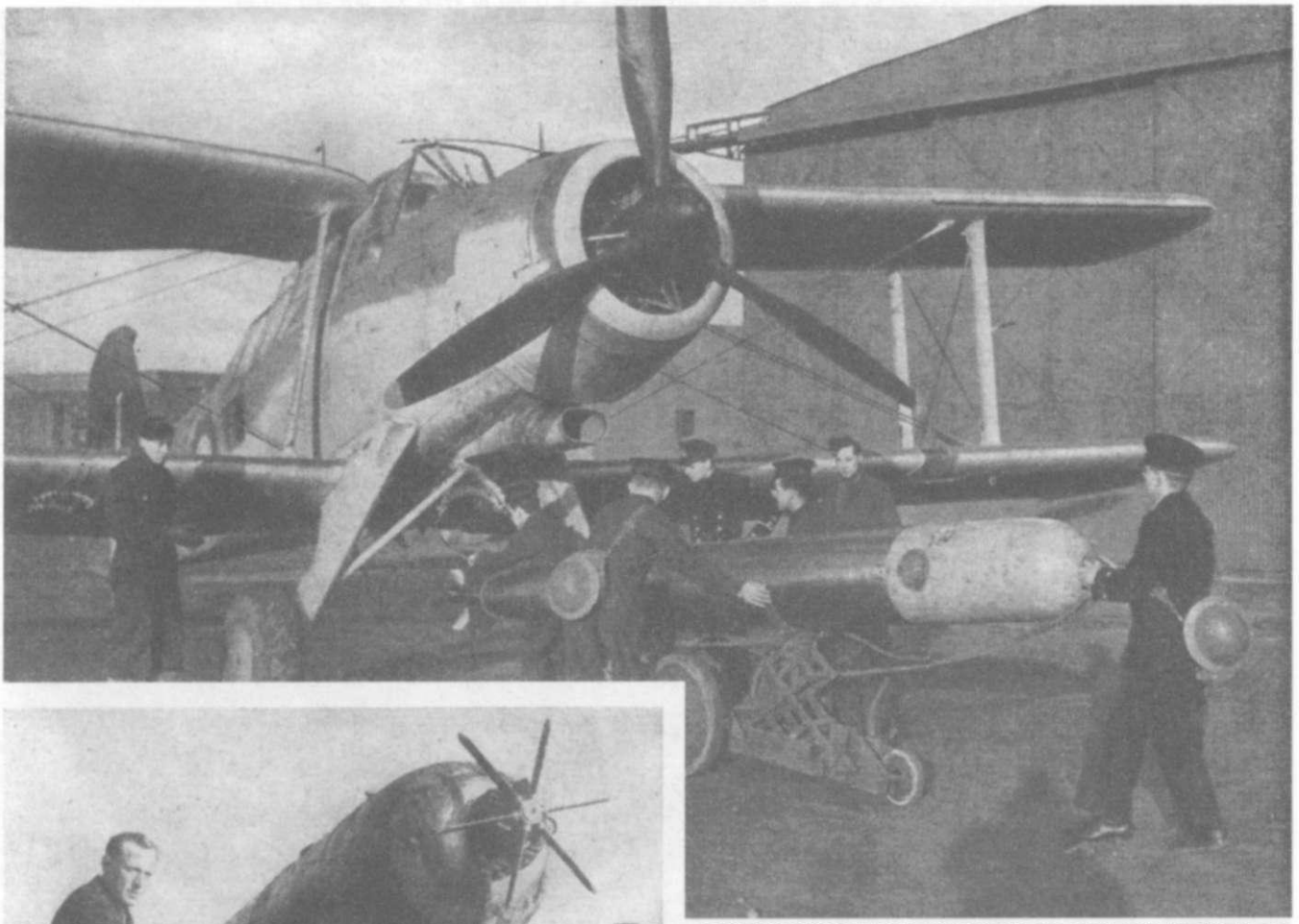
The Germans in Sicily may see yet another possibility—that of making contact with the great French colony of Tunis. They may have their plans for a seizure of Tunis, or of the French Navy, which, if report speaks true, is concentrated in the harbour of Bizerta.

But there is another side to the picture; it is true that Malta and the ships approaching and leaving it can be easily reached by Nazi dive-bombers operating from acrodromes in Sicily. But just as truly the whole of Sicily, not to mention southern Italy, Sardinia and Pantelleria, are also within range of British bombers taking off from our aircraft carriers or operating from bases in Greece, Crete, or west of Tobruk. And what if Wavell continues to march from triumph to triumph? What if the Italian resistance in North Africa collapses and the Italians at home begin to murmur and riot? Then Sicily might become a trap, like every other piece of land which is surrounded by water, to be sprung in good time by a Britain supreme at sea.

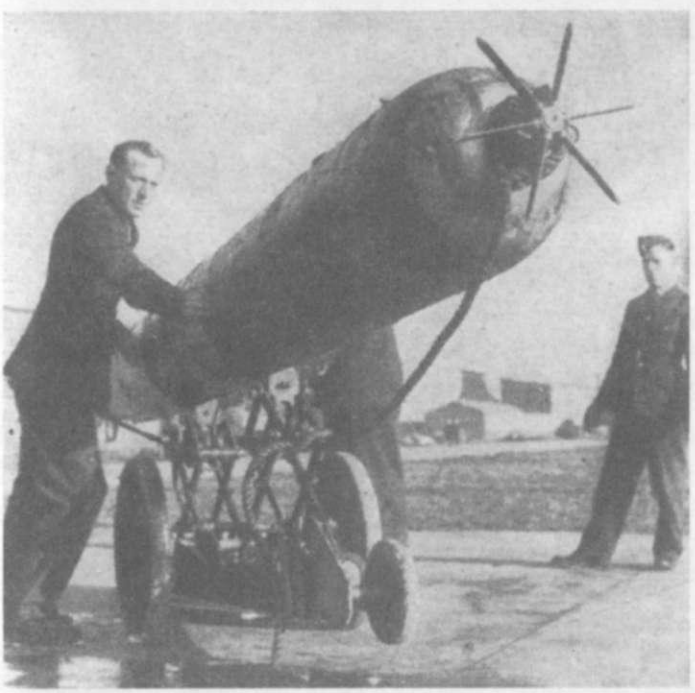
SICILY has now been taken over by the Germans as an air craft base for dive-bombers operating against our Mediterranean Fleet. This map shows the effective range of Junkers JU87 dive-bombers and twin-engined JU88s. Italian possessions are marked in black.

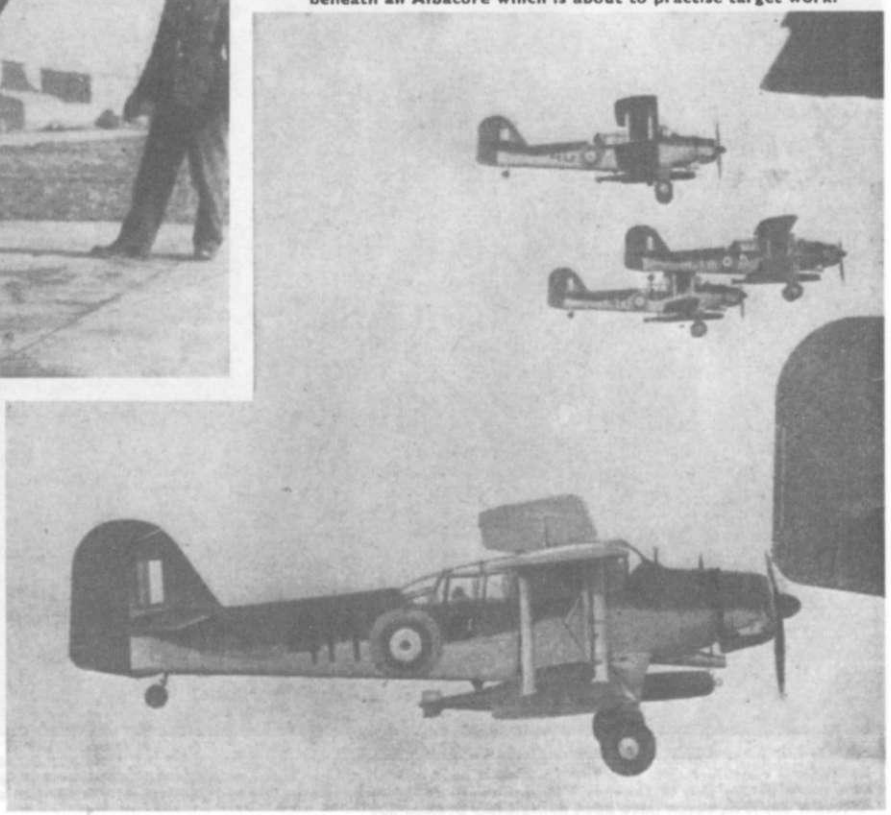
Photo, Keystone; map, courtesy of the "News Chronicle"

They Carry just One Torpedo—but One's Enough!



TORPEDO-DROPPING AIRCRAFT are used both by the Fleet Air Arm and by units of the Coastal Command, the former employing mostly Fairey Swordfish and Albacores, and the latter Bristol Beauforts. Above, a dummy torpedo is being fixed beneath an Albacore which is about to practise target work.





Some idea of the size of the torpedoes carried may be judged from the one above, which is being wheeled to the aircraft. Right, torpedo-carrying Albacores in flight.
Photos, Central Press and Fox

WHEN the Fleet Air Arm delivered its smashing blow against the Italian Navy at Taranto on November 11, 1940, the air-launched torpedo proved its full worth. The photographs in this page are some of the first to be taken at a Naval Station where pilots of the F.A.A. are instructed in the technical side of their duties. The course includes workshop routine, tactics, the loading of torpedoes on to aircraft, and finally practice with dummy torpedoes against target ships. See also Vol. III, pages 561, 573 and 629.

They Are Making It 'The Glory that *Is* Greece'

GREECE'S ARMY, a detachment of which is seen entraining for the Albanian front, continues to take heavy toll of the enemy. Despite the many efforts of General Cavallero, the new Italian C.-in-C. in Albania, to regain the initiative, his over-hastily prepared counter-attacks were smashed with heavy loss towards the end of January. It was estimated in Athens on January 26 that of the 20 Italian divisions employed on the Albanian front since October 28, 1940, seven have been completely broken up.

Photo, Associated Press

'Uncle Sam's' Navy of Today and Tomorrow

In the last war the Navy of the U.S.A. shared the burden and heat of the day with the Navy of Britain. Once again it is a powerful factor in a fast-developing situation, although as yet its guns have not begun to speak. Below we tell something of its size and power, actual and potential.

AMERICA—or, to speak more exactly, the United States of America—has the second largest Navy in the world, one that is second only to Britain's. Yet it is not large enough for her security. As Col. Frank Knox, United States Secretary of the Navy, made clear to Congress on January 17, the U.S.A. has been successful in maintaining the Monroe Doctrine, i.e. in keeping America for the Americans, only because the British Navy has been so overwhelmingly strong as to deter and defeat aggressors in Europe.

Outbuilt by the Axis

For 125 years that position has been maintained, but it is now threatened. Figures presented by Col. Knox showed that the United States Navy possessed 322 fighting ships on January 1, 1941, while the navies of the Axis Powers—Germany, Italy and Japan—were estimated to amount to 658 ships. And the situation is steadily worsening. By January 1942 the figures are calculated to be: U.S.A. fleet, 342 ships; Axis fleets, 803 ships. And by January 1943 the ratio is expected to be 422 compared with 962.

For many years, Col. Knox pointed out, the U.S.A. and the British Commonwealth of Nations have possessed what was in effect a two-ocean Navy, operated for a single peaceful purpose. "We—the U.S.A.—still have a one-ocean Navy," he went on. "We are building a two-ocean Navy, but its structure will not be complete for six years. We need to complete that structure so far as we can because the other part of our two-ocean Navy is now in grave danger." That "other part" is, of course, the British Navy, which, to quote Col. Knox again, "can survive only if the British Isles survive. Should the British Isles fall, we can only believe that the British Navy, which never runs from danger, will fall at the same time. I think we can safely assume that the British Navy will share the fate of the courageous nation that supports it. Should that come to pass our Fleet would necessarily be divided to meet the danger in both oceans. Whether it would be strong enough to protect even the regions nearest to us is a matter that cannot now be foretold. Once we lose the power to control even part of those seas, inevitably the war in Europe and Asia will be transferred to the Americas."

Fundamentally, the U.S. Secretary of the Navy went on, the present war is an attempt by Germany to seize control of the seas from Great Britain. Since the World War the United States has maintained a one-ocean Navy—in the Pacific. "That that Navy has proved adequate in both directions is only because the existence and deployment of Britain's Navy gave us security in the Atlantic."

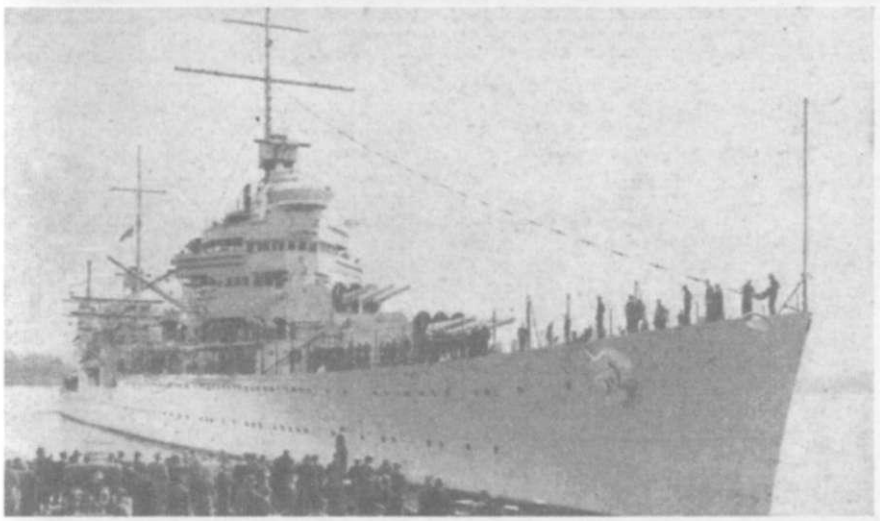
Such being the position, it is not surprising that the great republic is now taking dramatic steps to increase the power and size of her Navy—not because any responsible section of American opinion anticipates Britain is shortly about to collapse, but because the great mass of Americans now realize that Britain is fighting America's battle as well as her own. At present the U.S.A. is guarded by the British Navy; circumstances may be envisaged in which that protection could no longer be afforded, and it is only reasonable, therefore, that America should see to her own defence.

Up to now the United States Navy has been organized in two main divisions—the United States Fleet, with its main bases in California and Hawaii, and the Asiatic Fleet. From the former was detached a small force—a training unit comprising four of the oldest battleships, a division of cruisers of the latest type, and a number of destroyers and submarines—which was based on the east coast and known as the Atlantic Squadron. Since the war began this Atlantic Squadron—it was renamed last autumn the Atlantic Patrol Force—has grown until it now includes some 125 ships, and, as Col. Knox says, "has assumed a dignity which warrants its establishment as a separate fleet."

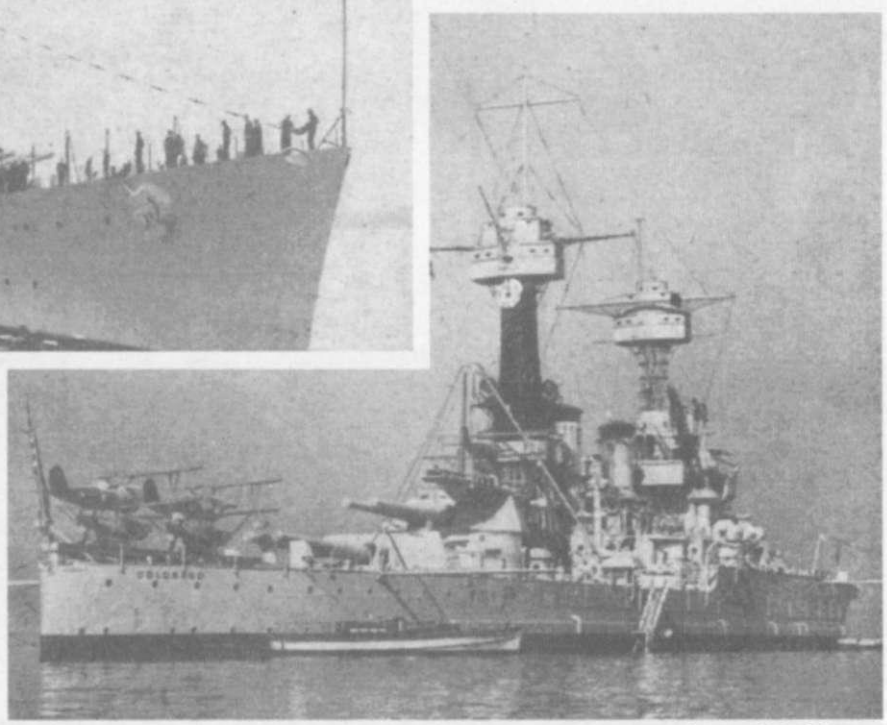
America's Three Fleets

Henceforth, then, the U.S.A. is to have three Fleets—Atlantic, Pacific and Asiatic—each with its own Commander-in-Chief. The Pacific Fleet is to remain as the largest and most important, and its Commander-in-Chief, who is also C.-in-C. of the combined Fleets, is Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, who has been in command of the cruisers of the United States Battle Force. The Atlantic Fleet is commanded by Rear-Admiral Ernest J. King, lately in command of the Atlantic Patrol Force, and the Asiatic by Admiral Thomas C. Hart—all these appointments taking effect from February 1, 1941.

In anticipation of the two-ocean Navy, a four thousand million dollar Navy Expansion Bill received the President's signature on July 20, 1940. On that date the American

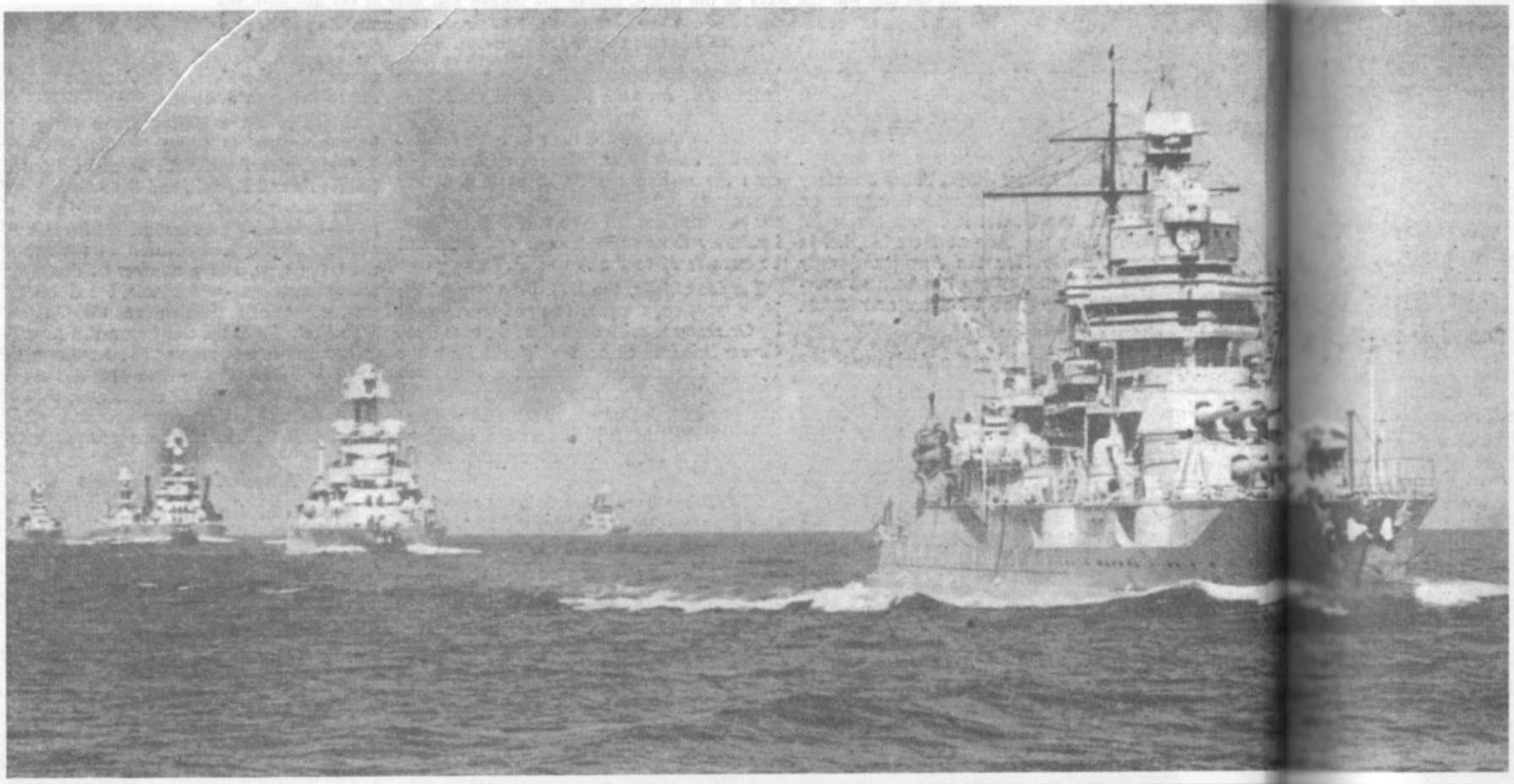


"MINNEAPOLIS" is a U.S. cruiser of 9,950 tons armed with nine 8-in. guns and eight 5-in. A.A. guns. She is fitted with two catapults and carries four aircraft.



"COLORADO" is one of a class of three battleships that are the newest in the United States Navy. She has a displacement of 32,500 tons. Her chief armament is eight 16-in. guns, twelve 5-in. guns and eight 5-in. A.A. guns and she has a speed of 21 knots. She has two catapults and carries three aircraft. The ship was completed in August, 1923. *Photos, Wide World*

American Naval Might in the Pacific: Some of the Ships Whic



America's Fleet the Second Largest in the World

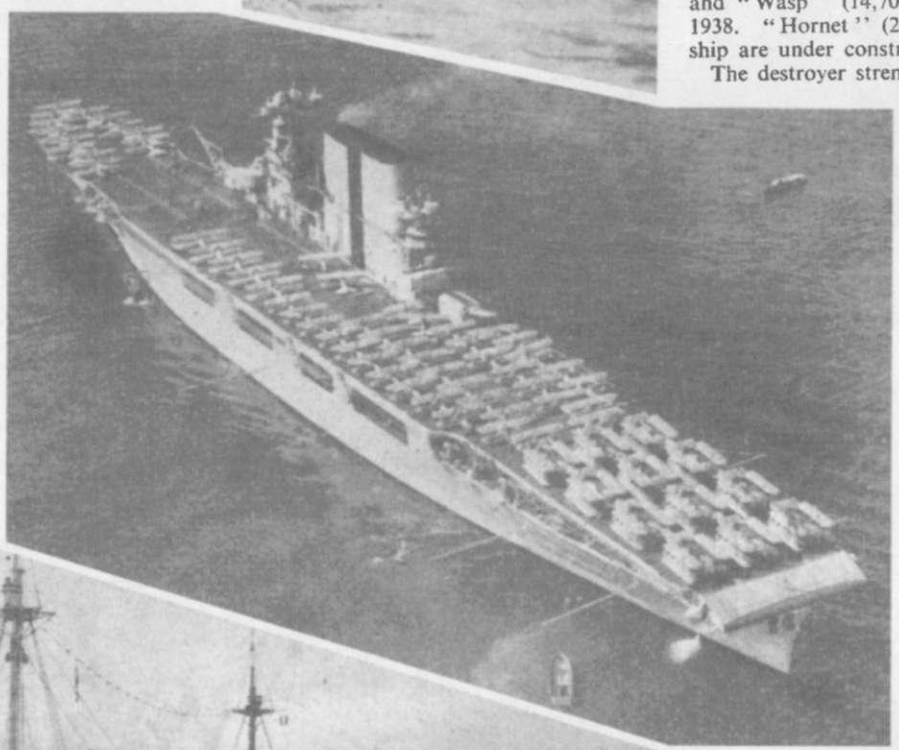
Navy was stated to consist of the following ships :—

Types	*Built: 1940*	*Building 1940*
Battleships	15	10
Aircraft Carriers	6	5
Cruisers	37	21
Destroyers	237	60
Submarines	102	40
Total	397	136

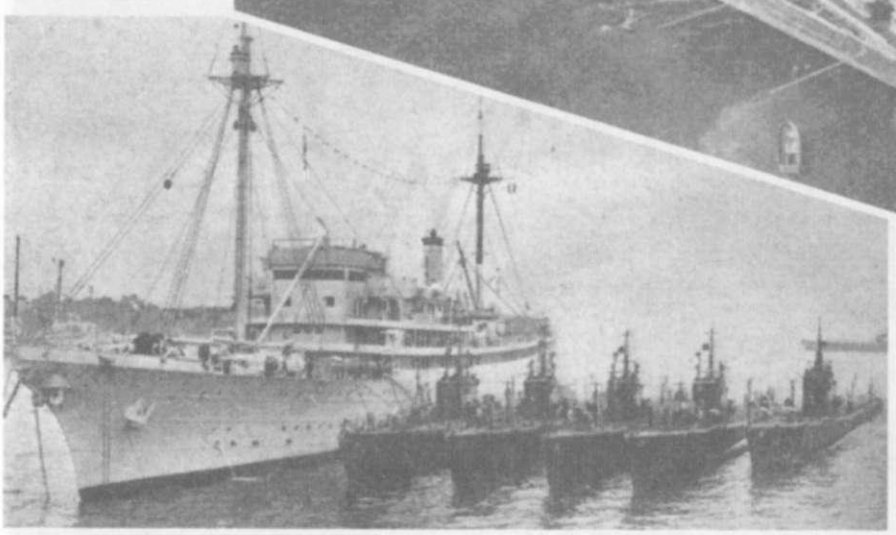
In addition to the ships included in the "building" column above, orders have been, or are about to be, given for a very large number of fresh vessels, so that by 1947 it is planned that America's two-ocean Navy shall comprise: 35 battleships, 20 aircraft carriers, 88 cruisers, 378 destroyers, and 180 submarines, a grand total of 701 ships. (Even so, its strength would be considerably below that estimated for the Axis fleets in 1943, estimated above to be 962).

America's Capital Ships

Now let us consider the American Fleet as it exists at the present time. First there are 15 battleships, actually built and in commission, but all are over age (in the American Navy a battleship is estimated to be over age when it is 20 years old). The biggest are "New Mexico" & "Idaho" (33,400 tons), which were laid down in 1915, and next ranks "Mississippi" (33,000 tons). Then there is the "Pennsylvania" (33,100 tons), and also "Arizona," "Tennessee," "California," "Maryland," "West Virginia," "Colorado," "Texas," "New York," "Nevada" and "Oklahoma"; and, smallest and oldest, "Arkansas" (26,000 tons), completed in 1912. At the outbreak of war three 35,000-ton battleships were under construction: "North Carolina," "Washington," and "South Dakota"; of these, the first two were launched in June 1940. Three battleships—"Maryland," "West Virginia," and "Colorado"—have eight 16-inch guns; the others, with the exception of "Arkansas," have ten or twelve 14-inch guns.



"SARATOGA," right, was the first aircraft carrier to be completed for the American Navy. She and her sister ship, the "Lexington," have displacement of 33,000 tons, the "Saratoga" carrying 79 aircraft and the "Lexington" 90. Both are to undergo reconstruction. The largest concentration of the U.S. Navy has hitherto been in the Pacific; top, destroyers are seen in line ahead during manoeuvres in that ocean.



SUBMARINES were first adopted by the American Navy in April 1900, eight months before the British Navy gave its first order for five of these craft. The first practical submarines were called Holland boats, after their designer, John P. Holland, who also gave his name to the submarine tender above. The "Holland" is here lying at San Diego, California, with some of her charges around her. *Photos, Wide World*

Cruisers and Aircraft Carriers

Next we come to cruisers. The U.S.A. possesses 18 of the heavy 8-inch-gun type, displacing 9,000 to 10,000 tons each, viz. Pensacola class, 2; Northampton, 6; Portland, 2; Minneapolis, 7; and Wichita. The first-named were completed in 1929-30, and the Wichita in 1939. Then there are 17 light cruisers (Brooklyn class 7, Omaha class 10, armed with 6-inch guns. Two light cruisers still under construction are "Helena" and "St. Louis," both of 10,000 tons with a principal armament of fifteen 6-inch guns.

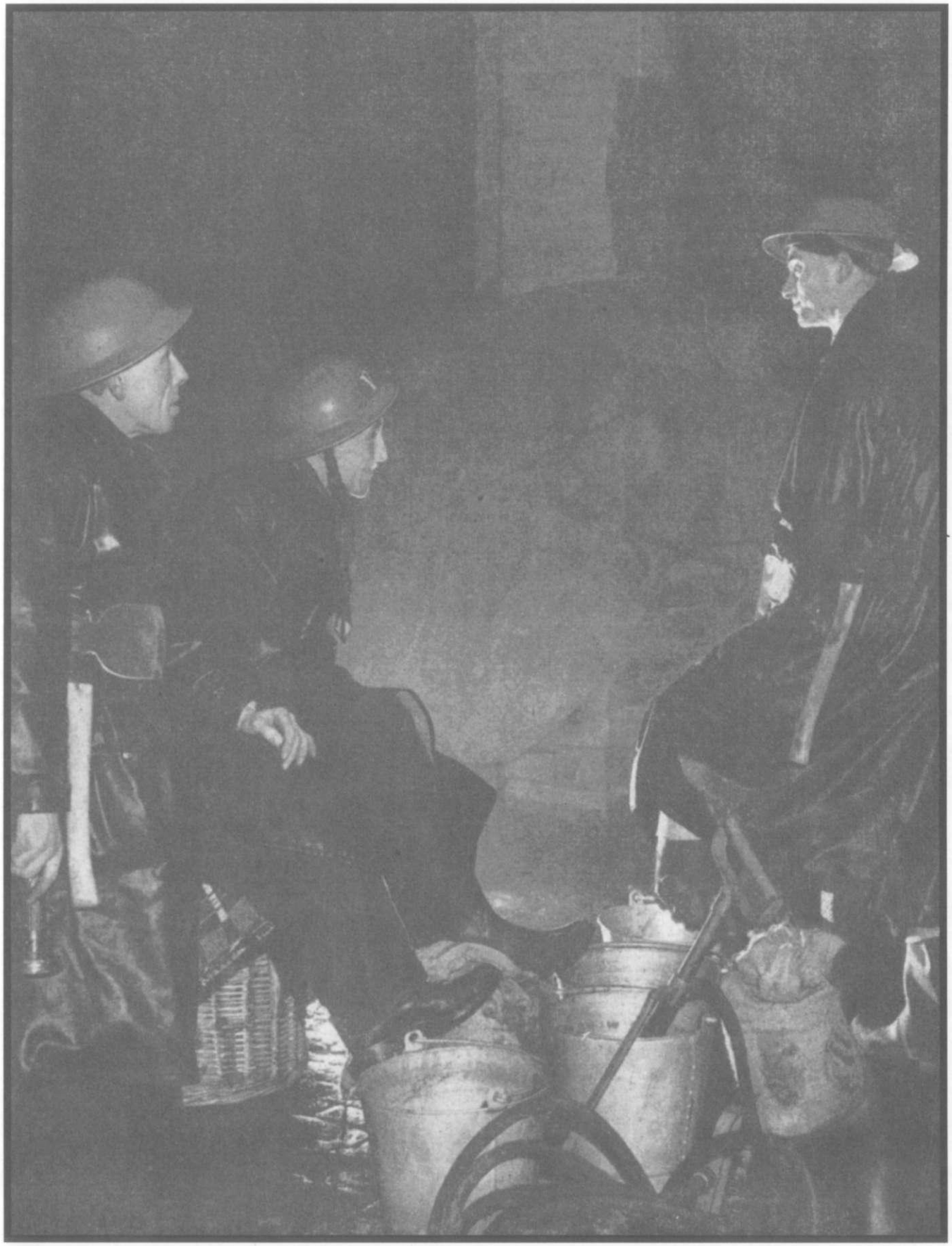
There are six aircraft carriers: "Ranger," completed in 1934; "Enterprise" and "Yorktown," completed in 1938; the giants "Lexington" and "Saratoga," completed in 1927 and displacing 33,000 tons; and "Wasp" (14,700 tons), completed in 1938. "Hornet" (20,000 tons) and a sister ship are under construction.

The destroyer strength is about 160, after allowing for the 50 recently transferred to the British Navy in exchange for bases in the Atlantic. During the last five years some 70 modern destroyers have been built; the latest, of the Benson class, displace 1,620 tons. Many more are on the stocks. Submarines number just under 100; (Col. Knox says that the present underseas fleet of the Axis Powers is 284, and that by 1943 it will be 500.) Mention may be made of the "Argonaut," which with its submerged displacement of 4,080 tons ranks second in size only to the French "Surcouf" (4,300 tons). The "Nautilus" and "Narwhal" are slightly smaller. Then there are many auxiliary vessels of one kind or another; 280 smaller warships for anti-submarine work and mine-sweeping have just been voted by Congress.

Like Britain the United States has a Naval Air Service. It is stated to be the largest in the world, its "useful" aeroplane strength being not less than 3,000.

With regard to the U.S. Navy's personnel, in 1939 the total number was less than 120,000. Since the war began it has increased to some 190,000, and in January 1941 it was raised to its full war strength of not far short of 300,000 officers and men. The Budget for 1942 allocates £2,897 millions to the Navy.

Keeping Watch for the 'Deathly Glow Lamps'

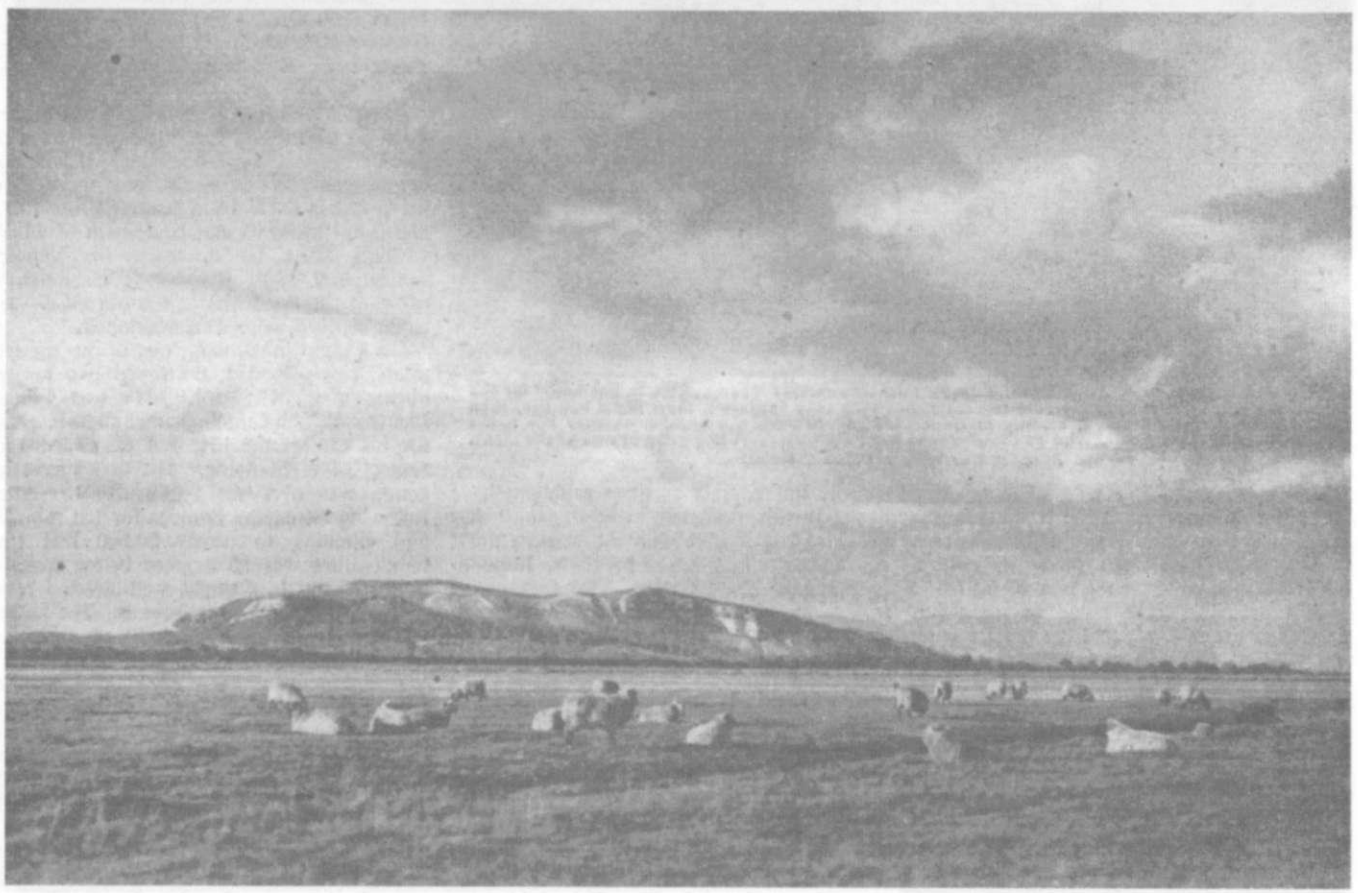


FIRE WATCHERS, whose vigilance through the dark winter nights should never be relaxed, wait at their post, ready to deal with any emergency. These three men in their steel helmets and oilskins are part of the great civilian army of Britain which is now in the "front line." On January 16, 1941, Mr. Herbert Morrison, Minister of Home Security, signed an order which made it obligatory for all persons between 16 and 60 not in Government service to register for fire-watching duty and so defeat the "deathly glow lamps"—to use his pregnant phrase. Stirrup-pump, axe, buckets and sand form the necessary equipment of the fire watcher. *Photo, "Daily Mirror"*

Saved from Terror, Perhaps from Death

EVACUATION OF CHILDREN from danger zones, especially from London, has again and again been urged upon parents, but the two photographs in this page present the argument in favour of it far more forcibly than any words could do. Top is a scene in the neighbourhood of Blackfriars Road, London, bombed at the end of 1940. Many children whose parents had taken advantage of the Government's scheme were spared the nights of terror that bring such devastation in their train. In the lower photograph are some of the kiddies who had been evacuated from Blackfriars, smiling and carefree at their wartime home, a Dorsetshire village. *Photo, Central Press*

Above War's Storms Broods Eternal Britain



FAR FROM THE WAR-SCORCHED TOWNS are thousands of square miles of peaceful countryside where the eternal spirit of Britain still reigns supreme. The winter sun shines down on hills and dales unscarred save by the kindly hand of Nature, giving promise, like the first snowdrops of spring, of better days to come. Here are two scenes, one in Scotland, one in England, such as must have given treasured and inspiring memories to millions in the stress of war. In the top photograph the plough is at work on Tweedside, at Manorfoot Bridge, near Peebles ; the lower one shows a winter pastoral on the Westmorland coast. with Whitbarrow Scar in the background.

Photos, "The Scotsman" and Fox

Britain's New Fighters in the Night Sky

In this article Grenville Manton discusses the problem of the night bomber—the problem to whose solution the best brains in aeronautics are devoting their attention in this country as (we may well believe) in Germany. The most effective answer, it is suggested, is likely to be the night fighter.

In this war no problem of defence has been more difficult to solve than the combating of the night bomber. Goering's Luftwaffe, baulked, battered and beaten in all its daylight assaults against this country, has for many weeks carried out raids under cover of darkness and, by flying at great heights, has managed to return to its bases with negligible losses. How best to meet this menace has been a matter which has engaged the minds of many. While ground defences from time to time are successful in bringing down one, two or more enemy aircraft, results have shown that some new departure or development is required to counter successfully massed night raids.

THIS R.A.F. TRIO are waiting light-heartedly in their quarters "somewhere in England" for the order to take off. They hope most fervently that they may contact a Nazi night bomber, then open fire with their deadly Browning machine-guns and so down yet another enemy. For hours they will be aloft, these cheerful and courageous comrades, partners in a grim drama of the night.

Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

The most promising way of combating the night bomber is to be found in the development of the night fighter patrol. In this there have been many difficulties, the greatest of which is the lack of visibility. Only those who have flown at night can appreciate the task which faces a pilot who, flying in the darkness, seeks another aircraft—what one pilot has described as "like trying to swat a wasp in a blacked-out room." Without the light of the moon, with no navigation lights to aid him, he can only scan the blackness with the hope that he may discern the tell-tale glow from the exhaust manifolds of the enemy machine. Even then it is impossible for him to tell friend from enemy by this means alone. Detecting the enemy—that has been problem No. 1.

Another difficulty which, though not insurmountable, has not been easy to overcome, is the evolution of a 'plane suited for the duties of night patrol and combat. Such a machine must have an exceptional rate of climb, it must have a top speed well in excess of that of the enemy bombers, it must have a long duration and it must have a reasonably slow landing speed. Here one thing counteracts another. If an aircraft is to remain in the air for many hours at a stretch it must carry a big load of fuel, and the bigger the load the slower the rate of climb, so that a compromise has to be made. Other qualities, too, tend to cancel out each other; a high top speed is usually obtained at the expense of control in the lower regions of the air speed indicator. It is all a matter of weight, power, size and speed. But baffling as these problems have been, British designers, whose genius has provided the R.A.F. with the world's finest day fighters, long-range bombers, torpedo-'planes and dive-bombers, have tackled the task of producing machines which will in the end take the sting out of the Nazi night attacks.

Meanwhile, our night-fighter pilots are growing in numbers, gaining more and more experience in a new technique of night interception which has now been evolved, and the toll they are taking is rising. In this work, which calls for a courage, skill and endurance of the highest order, the R.A.F. are using various types of 'planes. One is the Bristol Blenheim Mk.1 fighter-bomber, a mid-wing cantilever monoplane built throughout of metal. Two Bristol Mercury engines of 840 h.p. each give it a speed of nearly 300 m.p.h., and it has a range of 1,125 miles when flying at 200 m.p.h. It carries a crew of three and, besides a gun turret on top of the fuselage, a battery of four fixed machine-guns is arranged under the fuselage. The initial rate of climb of this multi-seat night fighter is 1,540 feet per minute, and it has a service ceiling of well over 27,000 feet. Tried and trusty, the Blenheim, which as a type is now five years old, drones in our skies with its steady two-motor throb, heard, but for the most part unseen, by the millions it seeks to protect in these long winter nights.

Sharing with the Blenheim this grim and hazardous task of seeking battle with the bomber in the cold and darkness is the Boulton Paul Defiant, that fine two-seater fighter which wrought havoc amongst the enemy at Dunkirk. Since then little has been heard of this machine, but, unknown to the public, it has been carrying on, its role changed from day-fighter to night-fighter; and when the full story can be told the Defiant's name will rank high amongst those 'planes which tore the German threat from the sky. At present no performance figures have been released; its speed, rate of climb, its useful load and duration and range—these are still secret. But it can be said that it is a low-wing monoplane with a Rolls-Royce 1,030 h.p. Merlin engine. Its span is 39 feet 6 inches; it has a wing area of 250 sq. ft., and its length is 30 feet. Behind the pilot's enclosed cockpit, the gunner is housed in a Boulton Paul electrically-operated gun turret. This turret is fitted with four Browning machine-guns which are so arranged that the gunner has a tremendous sweep of fire.

These are the machines which, augmented by other new types, will settle accounts with the Luftwaffe's night bombers. It will not be accomplished suddenly, any more than the Gotha in the last war was vanquished in a night, but methods and equipment of which nothing must be disclosed - for defence against the night bomber is as much a problem for the Nazis as for ourselves—are being evolved, tried and developed.

On a night in January, one of our fighter-pilots, single-handed, destroyed two raiders during a night patrol. He was Flight-Lieutenant John Cunningham, and he received for his exploit the first D.F.C. awarded in respect of night flying. His first successful action was over the South Coast. After following an enemy bomber for ten minutes and climbing to nearly 20,000 feet (the temperature was 50 degrees below freezing point) he put in a single, well-directed burst of fire lasting only four seconds. The raider, struck amidships, blew up with an explosion like a "firework display."

A few minutes later he sighted another enemy bomber flying above him. Undetected, he manoeuvred himself into position and then, easing up the nose of his aircraft, opened fire. Streams of tracer bullets could be seen striking the engines and cutting into the port wing. Both gunners were apparently killed or wounded with the first long burst, as there was no return fire. For about thirty seconds the enemy bomber flew on an even course; then, with engines almost stopped and streaming vapour, it turned slowly to port and dived towards the sea.

Finding the Answer to Goering's Murderers

THIS DORNIER 17 set out from the other side of the Channel on its errand of destruction. Flying high to evade the British searchlights and shells from A.A. guns, it was nevertheless doomed never to return to its base. Its dark form was spotted by a vigilant night-fighter pilot of the R.A.F.; machine-guns snapped, and the enemy plunged earthwards. Here two soldiers are seen viewing the burnt-out wreckage.

NIGHT-FLYING practice was in full swing, out under the stars ; a flickering line of naphtha flares marked the runway. At a signal from the control officer pupils were taking off into the inky darkness, doing their flights and landing again down the flare-paths, their landing lights stabbing the darkness like an angry luminous eye. A dozen or more aircraft were up there somewhere in the dark sky or lying out on the flying field.

Suddenly the "flap" arose. A lorry rumbled up to the Control Officer. A sergeant jumped down and passed over a message. By the light of the torch slung round his neck the officer hastily read the message. The word was passed round : "All flying to cease, uncover the flares."

From nowhere running figures appeared ; the line of flares sprang into greater brilliance as the lid from each was uncovered. The waiting machines were swung around and taxied to the edge of the field, coloured rockets soared into the sky.

"There are two fighters from 'X' trying to get down - think they may be landing here," said the control officer. Then a moment later : "What's that light, is that a star ? I believe it's one of the Hurricanes ! "

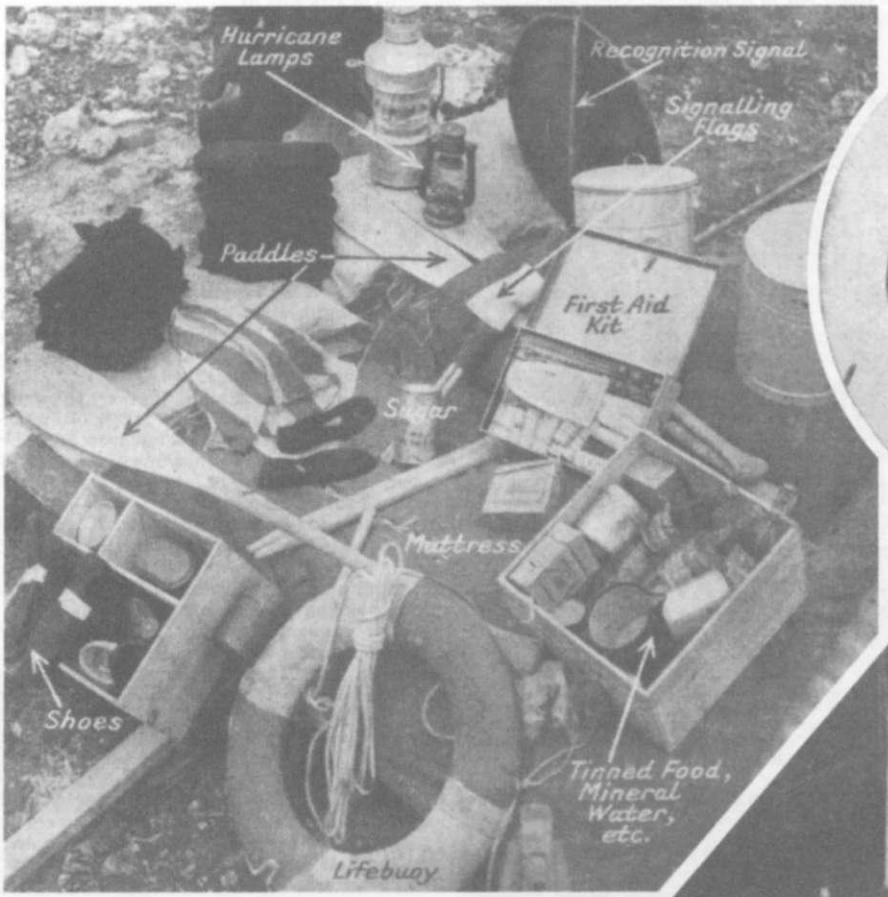
Sure enough, the "star" rapidly assumed the appearance of a meteor flying straight towards us. Then another navigation light could be seen. It was a fighter coming down to land. A few moments later it had "touched down" and was being taxied out of harm's way. "Well, that's one, anyway—I wonder where the other man is ? "

Over in the Nissen hut, the sketchy night quarters for the pupils and instructors on night flying, there was subdued excitement. At the field telephone a duty pilot was busy. Messages were passed to the parent fighter station, Observer Corps, and the police. For miles around the countryside was on the watch for the missing fighter. Half-an-hour passed. Then came the news that the fighter had come down safely a few miles away. Night-flying practice resumed its normal routine. The "flap" was over.

PILOT AND GUNNER of a Bristol Blenheim fighter go aboard their 'plane. Messages have been flashed to the night fighter squadrons, orders have been given, and air crews who have been standing-by promptly set out to patrol the sky to locate and destroy the prowling enemy. So begins one more gallant attempt to check Goering's night raiders.

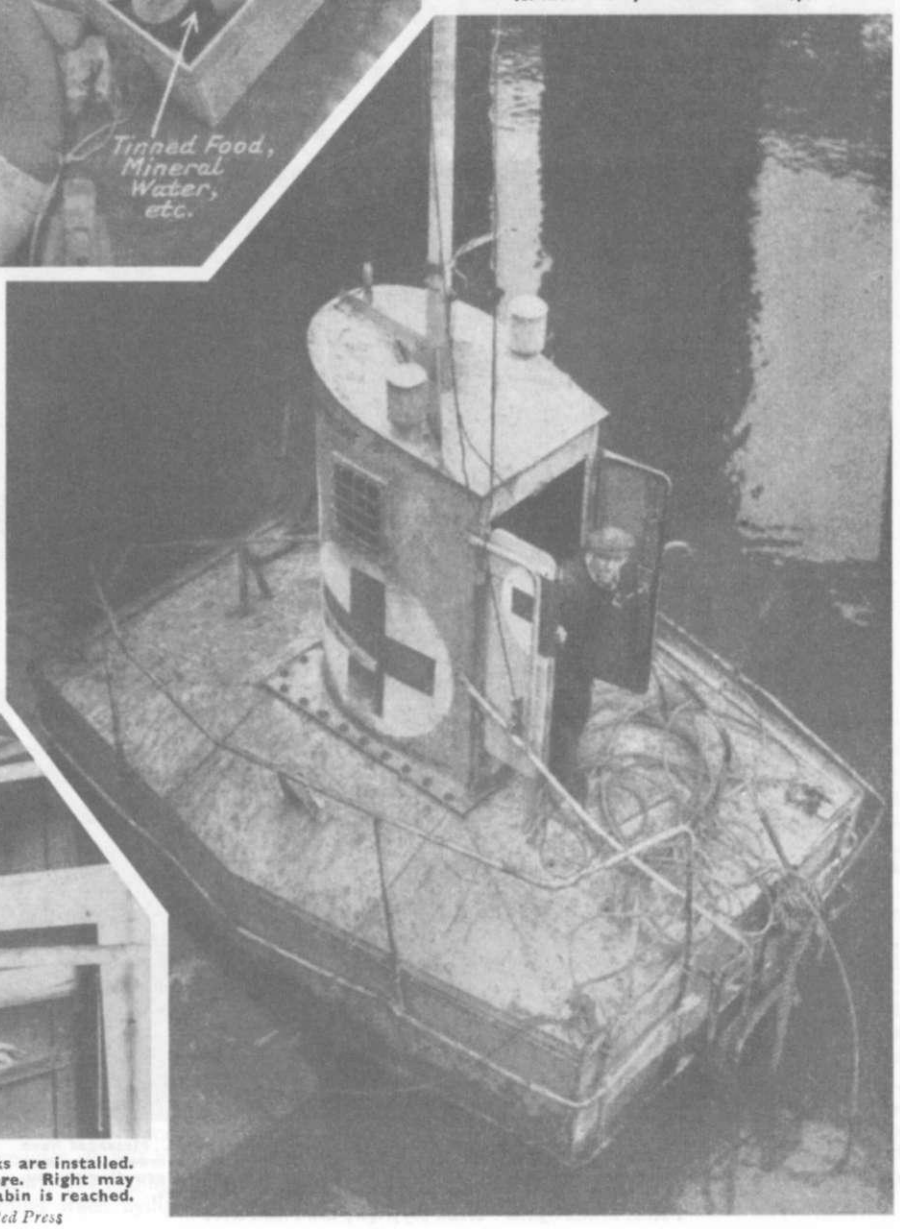
Photos, British Official : Crown Copyright ; and Planet News

For Nazi Flyers Who Fail to Get Home



The equipment brought ashore from a refuge buoy which drifted across the Channel is seen, left, with the chief items labelled. Above is the upper part of the buoy, much battered by its involuntary cross-Channel trip.

DURING the struggle for air supremacy over our shores a vast number of German aircraft have been shot down into the sea or have been so seriously damaged as to be forced to alight in the ocean. Many German airmen have been rescued by British sailors, but to afford succour to those who descend unseen the Germans have established floating refuges moored off the coastline of Holland, Belgium and France. These refuges, in appearance rather like the conning-tower of a submarine, contain everything likely to be needed by a marooned airman. A gangway from the water to the deck gives access to the refuge, which is equipped with sleeping bunks, medical stores, food and emergency equipment, including a flagstaff for hoisting distress signals. These floating sick bays are painted bright yellow to increase their visibility.



ON THE REFUGE-BUOY below deck four bunks are installed. No one was aboard this buoy when it drifted ashore. Right may be seen the steel watertight hatch by which the cabin is reached.

Photos, Topical, Sport & General, and Associated Press

Eye Witness Stories of Episodes and Adventures in the Second Great War

Near Tobruk I Saw a Terrible Sight

The final advance of our troops on Tobruk was so rapid that the war correspondents were able to follow in the wake of supply columns half an hour after the attack opened. One of them was Reuters' special correspondent, whose vivid account of the scene is given below.

THE battle began for me on Sunday morning (Jan. 19) when I took up quarters at the deserted El Adem airfield behind Tobruk. Amid more than eighty wrecked 'planes—the ghost of Graziani's air force—we were shelled periodically by "Tobruk Tom," the big gun of the "San Giorgio." I lay flat in a silt trench as shells plugged the field.

That night the Royal Navy poured broadsides into Tobruk, and the ground shook to the crashing of 15-inch shells. Throughout the night, too, the R.A.F. rained bombs on the port.

When this terrific air onslaught ceased a sinister silence hung over Tobruk. Then I heard the low rumbling of tanks and lorries. The "big show" was on.

I moved up to our advanced positions. After another intensive R.A.F. bombardment lasting two and a half hours the full force of the British artillery barrage opened up. Tanks and infantry went into action. . . .

Half an hour after the attack started I followed in the wake of supply columns and Red Cross units over the broken defences. In the growing light of dawn I met the first batch of Italian prisoners coming out.

Some Australian wounded walking past shouted: "Look out, mate. You'll cop it farther down the track."

They were right. Half a mile farther on we narrowly escaped a barrage from enemy gun positions still firing frantically.

Then I saw a terrible sight. Thousands of Italian prisoners streaming back were caught in the barrage from their own guns. Shells burst among them, killing many and wounding others. The remainder dashed panic-stricken in all directions.

When I reached the gun positions which had been our first objective I found the Australians—true to type—had got there ahead of schedule. They had taken the positions in two hours instead of the four allowed for by the staff.

Many of the guns there had received direct hits from our covering artillery. Red Cross men were already attending the wounded crews.

I spoke to the crew of a British tank christened the Caterpillar, which had broken a gap in the perimeter wire. The sergeant was modest about it. He said: "We did nothing. We take our hats off to the sappers for cutting the wire. Those blokes are superb."

Stretched below was a sandy plain extending to the final escarpment dropping down to Tobruk. Over the port itself black smoke came from oil dumps and barracks set ablaze by our bombers.

I took up a position next to a gun observation post. While the commanding officer was giving crisp telephonic instructions to the batteries stationed in the rear I saw the Imperial Army moving across the plain to attack the Solario and Airente forts.

It was an astounding sight. Like ants on the vast desert, the troops moved methodically without hurry towards their objective. Bren-gun carriers, infantry, tanks, and armoured cars and infantry went forward in perfect order.

The battery behind me was giving the foremost fort a terrific drubbing. Columns of jet black smoke hung over its walls.

Throughout the attack I was most impressed by the skill and accuracy of the British artillery. Before the capture of this strategic ridge all firing had been "blind," but its effects were deadly. There was something uncanny about its accuracy.

Towards sunset the roar of battle went on. We decided to dash down the road direct to Tobruk. A staff car went ahead with an officer of the Ordnance Corps on board.

From the top of the final escarpment we saw Tobruk for the first time. Below us lay the white houses of the town, with the setting sun glinting off the still waters of the harbour.

A large liner lay at anchor – ablaze from stem to stern. Smaller craft which were tied up alongside were also in flames. Masts and funnels of sunken vessels showed above the surface. The "San Giorgio" lay in the harbour mouth.

A few men wandering through the town were the only signs of life, but a formidable battery of at least six guns, posted on a headland, was blazing away on the advancing British forces . . .

We of the 'Terror' Pounded Tobruk

The veteran monitor "Terror" (see page 66) was prominent in the naval bombardment that preceded the attack on Tobruk. For nearly two hours her 15-inch guns lobbed tons of high explosive into the Italian lines, as described here by W. F. Hartin, "Daily Mail" special correspondent, who was on board the "Terror" at the time.

WE on board the "Terror" were part of a now famous flotilla which includes gunboats built for Chinese rivers—incongruous craft which, because of their shallow draught and indomitable crews, can skate over minefields and are always popping up where the Italians least expect them.

Yet as we waited in the early hours of darkness to take up our positions we were not without misgivings. Tobruk had the reputation of being a well-defended port, with two heavy shore batteries apart from an old cruiser, the "San Giorgio."

This vessel, torpedoed and bombed at the outbreak of war, and partially sunk in Tobruk Harbour, was still able to fire her 10-in. and 7·5-in. armament.

We were anxious to test these possibilities before the hardy little gunboats, prowling right under the Italian defences, were exposed to outranging fire.

For this reason, steering a course carefully plotted against the possible range of these batteries, we went into action first

Zero hour had arrived, and we crossed the line where our chart showed we must open fire. The fire-bell rang with an inconsequential ting-ting, like the bell of a London 'bus.

A second later and the darkness and everything else were lost in that first terrific and vivid flash of death. The old ship shuddered as the roar swept around us.

Somewhere in that sandy ravine known as Wadi Sehel, west of Tobruk, we knew that shell would spread wreckage and destruction

THE HAUL OF PRISONERS at Tobruk, the siege of which is graphically described by an eye-witness in this page, was as colossal as it had been a fortnight before at Bardia, where this photograph of surrendering Italians was taken. Over 100,000 Italians have so far been captured during the swift Libyan campaign. *Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright*

I WAS THERE!

among the dense concentration of Italian reserves waiting there to meet and counter-attack the first onrush of the Imperial forces.

Far away we could see lights winking momentarily. "The shore batteries," we said to one another in a silence which hung heavily by contrast with the roar of the guns.

We waited to hear the whine of shells seeking us out, but none came; and we took up our solo song of destruction again.

If the shore batteries are not replying, we thought, at least we may expect an attack from some E-boats which the Italians were known to have in the harbour. Look-outs, muffled to the ears, scanned with night glasses the placid waters now growing more luminous as the hour of moonrise approached.

Still, there seemed no response from doomed Tobruk, and between us and the faintly discernible shore we now saw new winks of light which meant that the other gunboats were also in action.

With monotonous regularity we pounded away, the gunnery officer shifting his range so that our shells would fall first in one area and then in another.

Thus he brought the camps, transport, vital junction where five roads meet, and the area in which were the Italian headquarters, under harassing fire.

Finally came the order to cease fire, and none of us was really sorry, for we were all tired. At times we had been firing very near our own troops, and only the most accurate calculations had avoided a margin of error which might have flung the shell wide by just those few hundred yards separating our forces from the Italians.

A thin crescent moon stole into the sky to guide us on our course seawards. Our consorts joined us, and as we rolled home like the three jolly huntsmen we saw that the Air Force were taking up the job where we had left it . . .

I Saw the R.A.F.'s Bombs Rock Tobruk

The final assault on Tobruk was heralded by tremendous bombing attacks by the R.A.F. which started at 3 a.m. on January 21. The "Daily Mail" Special War Correspondent, Alexander Clifford, took part in one of these raids, which he describes in the following graphic dispatch.

EARLY on the morning of January 21, by the light of the dying moon, I saw the R.A.F. unleash a cyclonic blitz that opened the British Army's attack on beleaguered Tobruk. The rear-gunner's turret of a British long-range bomber was my front-row seat for the most thrilling show I have ever witnessed.

For the Italians the offensive began soon after three in the morning. For me it started 12 hours earlier in a sandy fly-haunted shack beside a desert airfield. The squadron leader had summoned the pilots to hear instructions.

"Blitz on Tobruk tonight," he told them, "Take off after midnight. There will be five targets. You can take your choice."

All knew they would be duelling with the enemy in a few hours and that gave a zest to the conversation.

For those few intervening hours we dozed on straw mattresses. Then, booted, helmeted and warmly overalled, we were walking out to dimly silhouetted 'planes.

The moon, like a luminous slice of melon, was topping the horizon as we screamed down the flare-path, and lifted gently into the night.

There was nothing to see. I crouched down, trying to keep warm and watching spangles of stars slide past the little glass bubble above me. Vaguely in my earphones I heard the crew chatting about heights, courses, clouds, and navigation signals. I fell asleep.

Somebody wakened me and yelled "Tobruk!" I fumbled my way forward and peered out of the 'plane's transparent nose to see earth and sky slashed with flame.

Groups of big yellow flashes were bombs landing. Clusters of incendiaries wove crazy patterns of dazzling white flame athwart the landscape.

To my unaccustomed eyes the A.A. barrage seemed terrific. It was our turn to go in. For a second there was icy panic inside me and I wished I had not come. Then I grew too excited to be afraid.

I raced back through the 'plane's darkened belly, past the bomb-aimer lying flat on his stomach, and over racks of sleek, yellow bombs waiting to be released. Fumblingly, I eased myself into the rear-gunner's turret.

Through earphones I heard the bomb-aimer's steady monologue:

"Bomb-doors open . . . left . . . left . . . steady . . . right . . . steady." Then a pause. Then, sharply, "Bombs gone!"

I swivelled my turret round, manoeuvring to see the bombs land. I had almost given them up when the earth below me erupted in five flaming volcanoes. "Plumb in the target area," came the bomb-aimer's voice.

Stuff was coming up all around us. The sky seemed filled with coloured tracers, and A.A. guns were going flat out.

Back we turned, and plunged again into the fantastic blaze of bursting shells. Another flare was burning, and Tobruk's bay and promontory showed up like a gigantic thumb sticking out into the sea.

We made a straight run for the target, but showers of tracers met us and barred the way. The pilot swerved momentarily and tried again from another angle. Again I heard, "Bombs gone!" and this time I saw flames belch up straight across the road junction we were aiming at.

Two blinding flashes to our left made me jump, and I reported to the pilot, "A.A. shells close behind." For a couple of seconds we swerved and twisted, eluding the gunners. Then we jockeyed into position for a third run.

This took us slap through the thickest barrage. The grounded cruiser "San Giorgio" in the harbour was pumping up stream after stream of tracers. I saw a white one coming straight at me—a diamond necklace this time. Then it veered off slowly and missed.

Right in the middle of the barrage our bombs fell, and flares with them. This time the result was spectacular. A large barnlike building flashed into orange flame, and its roof soared gently upwards, then fell back in fragments. Swirls of white smoke spiralled up, and as we swung away out to sea I saw two more explosions shatter the flaming walls.

Those were our last bombs, and once more we passed Tobruk and watched other people's bombs crash down against the fantastic background of A.A. fire. The Italian gunners were certainly standing up to their job well.

Dawn was glimmering on the eastern horizon as we raced back to our base. But other slim black shapes sped past us invisible in the darkness. They would be over Tobruk as dawn broke . . . .

DESERT AIRMEN have just landed with their Blenheims after an intensive raid on beleaguered Tobruk and are enjoying welcome refreshment, mugs of tea and sandwiches, in the Western Desert. Tobruk was bombed again and again by the R.A.F. before it was finally captured on January 22.
Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

Cartoon Commentary on the War

"I MUST HAVE A SCREW LOOSE SOMEWHERE"

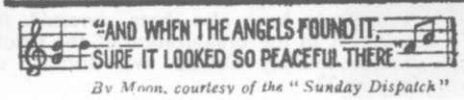
From the "Salt Lake Tribune"

WAR and political upheaval provide grist for the mills of those modern-day lampooners, the cartoonists. In a world increasingly used to the visual image the cartoonist, by skilful exaggeration of his theme, lays bare before mankind the essential weaknesses of those things or persons against which he tilts, pricking bombast with the stroke of a pen and pointing a moral in Indian ink.

'DIGGERS' FOR VICTORY!

By Illingworth, courtesy of the "Daily Mail"

"A LITTLE BIT OF HEAVEN"



By Moon, courtesy of the "Sunday Dispatch"

"SAY SOMETHING!—SO THAT MY PATIENCE CAN BE EXHAUSTED!"

By Zec, courtesy of the "Daily Mirror"

OUR SEARCHLIGHT ON THE WAR

How America Helps the Axis

RECENTLY Mr. Martin Dies remarked that in some ways the United States were aiding the Axis countries more than the Allies. The way that this is possible is an indirect one. American goods, more particularly cotton and plant for oil-fields, may reach Germany through Russia. In the course of two months – October 15 to December 15— the Soviet purchased from American exporters more cotton than her normal imports from all sources in one year. This fact is illuminating when it is also revealed that in 1940 Germany imported from Russia 100,000 tons of cotton, and that it is proposed to increase this amount in the future. The economic pact signed between the two countries at Moscow on January 10 lends significance to a report that has reached London from Buenos Aires to the effect that Russia intends to create a merchant fleet of some 200 vessels solely to bring her imports from North and South America and later re-export them to her European customers.

New Czechoslovak Centre in London

AT 18, Grosvenor Place, London, S.W., a social and cultural centre for Czechoslovaks in this country was opened by Mr. Eden, the Foreign Secretary, on January 21, 1941. The Czechoslovak Institute, as it is called, will co-ordinate the work of Czechoslovak communities in various parts of the country and will also provide a link between the Czechoslovak peoples in this country and those in other parts of the Empire. The Institute will be the headquarters of Czechoslovak writers and dramatists, and there will be frequent exhibitions by Czechoslovak painters as well as concerts and other social functions.

Badge for R.A.F. Bomb Disposal Units

THE special badge worn by Royal Engineers engaged on bomb disposal has been illustrated in page 722, Vol. III. Now we illustrate the distinctive badge which has just been approved for personnel of the bomb disposal squads of the R.A.F. The badge depicts a bomb with the letters B and D on either side of it within a laurel-wreath. When worn with the blue home service dress of the R.A.F. the badge is in light blue silk on a dark blue background. For wear with tropical dress the badge is in red on a khaki background. Personnel of the R.A.F. bomb disposal squads will wear

R.A.F. BOMB DISPOSAL SQUADS BADGE
Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

the badge on the right upper sleeve of the service dress jacket.

Portable Canteens on Railway

PORTABLE canteens on railway trains were inaugurated on January 20, 1941, by the L.M.S., acting in co-operation with the Army Welfare, Y.M.C.A., and Salvation Army authorities, to enable members of the Forces travelling by train to obtain light refreshments at prices similar to those charged in their own canteens. By means of special portable equipment, an ordinary third-class compartment can speedily be fitted up as a canteen. The carriage next can be used for stores or fitted with a portable draining board for washing-up. The first train to leave Euston with one of these canteens on board carried sufficient tea for 800 cups, and a plentiful supply of meat pies, sausage rolls, fruit tarts and buns.

The first canteen for Servicemen on a Scotch express of the L.M.S. was inspected by a party of distinguished visitors at Euston on January 20, 1941. Left to right are Princess Helena Victoria, Lieut.-Col. Moore-Brabazon, Minister of Transport, Lord Croft, Under-Secretary of State for War, and Lord Stamp, Chairman of the L.M.S., at the inauguration. *Photo, Topical*

Britain's New Ambassador in U.S.A.

LORD HALIFAX was personally welcomed to America on January 24 by President Roosevelt who, in an unprecedented gesture of friendship towards Great Britain, boarded his yacht, the "Potamac," and sailed down Chesapeake Bay to meet the new Ambassador at Annapolis. Lord and Lady Halifax and their suite had crossed the Atlantic in Britain's newest battleship, H.M.S. "King George V," having been seen off from a northern British base by the Prime Minister and Mrs. Churchill, and Mr. Harry Hopkins, the President's personal envoy in Britain (see photo, p. 140). Soon after reaching Washington Lord Halifax paid his first visit to the Secretary of State, Mr. Cordel Hull, and, after an hour's conference with him, told the reporters: "We see things very much alike." He added: "We have no illusions about Germany's strength or plans, but we know they will not succeed. England is in good heart."

Poles' Gift Towards a New Guildhall

GENERAL SIKORSKI, Prime Minister of Poland, has sent to Mr. Winston Churchill a cheque for £450, contributed by Polish serving officers and men and civilians now resident in this country, towards the rebuilding of Guildhall, "as a token of our lasting admiration of the gallant-hearted men and women of London." Thanking General Sikorski for this generous gift, Mr. Churchill wrote: "This is a moving token which will stir the hearts of everyone in this city and Empire. We see in it a symbol of the friendship of the great Polish nation, whose homes have been broken and whose monuments have been shattered, but whose free spirit will never crumble like bricks or stone."

Hostel for Working Boys

A HOSTEL for young lads working in London whose mothers and families have been evacuated has just been opened in Camberwell by the Cambridge University Settlement. If it is a success other similar hostels will be set up in London and big provincial cities. Accommodation is provided for 40 boys who will be selected by various welfare organizations. They must be between the ages of 14 and 20, and they pay £1 a week, or, if they cannot afford it, two-thirds of their wages. A lunch is packed ready for them when they leave for work in the morning, and a hot meal awaits them when they arrive home at night.

Collapse of Iron Guard Revolt

DISORDERS in Rumania, said to have been fomented by Germany for her own ends, reached their climax on January 22. The revolt originated in a split in the Iron Guards, the minority being opposed to General Antonescu and blaming him for shortage of food, general conditions of hardship, and mass executions. On Jan. 22 reports filtered through from Bucharest that the rebels were in control of police headquarters, the Ministry of the Interior, and the radio station, and that troops were firing upon them with machine-guns. By the next day, 1,000 people having been killed in Bucharest alone, the revolt was reported to be dwindling. The rounding-up of the rebels continued and their leader, M. Horia Sima, Deputy Premier of Rumania, was stated to have been arrested and to be "awaiting his destiny" before a court martial. The former Ministers of the Interior and of Propaganda have also been arrested for their part in the organization of the revolt. A new military Cabinet was formed on January 27.

'Miss Ack-Ack' Had a Date with Jerry!

They were in the middle of a rehearsal when an Alert sounded. "Jerry," like Time, waits for no man, so the rehearsal was called off while contact was made with the battery.

MAKE-BELIEVE is a fine anti-dote for boredom, as soldiers well know; hence the popularity of concert parties in this war as well as the last. These "ladies," in reality men of the R.A. from a Coastal Defence Battery, were to give a show at a local town hall, and are here posing for the cameraman in their stage costumes. What happened next is shown in the photograph top right.

Then, still wearing their dresses, the dancers rushed to their action stations—wolves in sheep's clothing, so to speak. But "it will be all right on the night"—and on "Der Tag," as well!

Photos, John Topham

OUR DIARY OF THE WAR

TUESDAY, JAN. 21, 1941 *507th day*

On the Sea—Admiralty announced loss of H.M. trawlers "Manx Prince" and "Refundo."

War against Italy—Imperial troops, supported by Royal Navy and R.A.F., penetrated defences of Tobruk to depth of 5 miles on a broad front. Italian cruiser "San Giorgio" in harbour set on fire.

During night of 20-21 R.A.F. carried out heavy raids on Catania (Sicily) and Derna (Libya).

East of Kassala British troops in pursuit of retreating Italian forces reached point 30 miles inside Eritrea.

Assab and Massawa raided by R.A.F. and Neghelli and Javello by S. African Air Force.

Home Front—Considerable enemy activity over eastern part of England during daylight. Bombs fell in outskirts of London and in Home and Eastern Counties. No night raids.

Enemy bomber shot down in Channel.

Home Front—Enemy aircraft dropped bombs at places in Yorks and Kent during daylight. After dark a few bombs fell in Eastern Counties.

Two German bombers destroyed by R.A.F. fighters.

Greek War—Greeks reported to have achieved important advance in Klisura sector. Intensification of aerial warfare reported. Allied air forces again attacked Valona and Berat. Enemy aircraft raided Salonika and other ports.

THURSDAY, JAN. 23 *509th day*

War against Italy—British troops reached coast near Derna, and Mekili, 50 miles inland. R.A.F. bombers attacked Apollonia, Derna and Maraua. During night of 23-24 aerodrome of Maritza, Rhodes, was raided.

In Eritrea British troops were in contact with Italian forces withdrawn from Kassala

THE PRIME MINISTER AND LORD HALIFAX stood watching with interest the great new British battleship "King George V" in the dim light of a January day as they approached her in a tender at a northern port. The "King George V" is the first of five ships of her class to be commissioned. These 35,000-ton ships represent the latest practice in naval architecture.
Photo, British Official: Crown Copyright

Greek War—Athens reported that successful local operations had been carried out.

Reported that R.A.F. had carried out heavy raids on Valona during night of 19-20 and by daylight on January 20. Military objectives at Elbasan were also raided.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22 *508th day*

On the Sea—Admiralty announced that H.M. destroyer "Hyperion" had been sunk by our forces after being severely damaged by torpedo or mine.

In the Air—Two small fighter sweeps carried out by Polish pilots over enemy-occupied territory between Straits of Dover and R. Somme. Low-level attacks made on aerodromes, troops and ground defences.

At night R.A.F. bombers attacked targets at Düsseldorf and other parts of the Ruhr.

War against Italy—Tobruk captured by Australians. Mopping-up operations in western section of perimeter proceeding. R.A.F. raided barracks at Apollonia.

Aerodromes in Sicily heavily raided by British bombers during night of 22-23, including Comiso, Augusta, Syracuse, and Catania.

In Kassala sector Italian forces reported to have withdrawn 40 miles into Eritrea, pursued by British. On Kenya front enemy was being driven out of British territory.

area and holding defensive positions covering Biscia and Barentu.

In Abyssinia pressure on enemy east of Metemma was maintained. S. African Air Force successfully bombed Sciasciamanna, 120 miles south of Addis Ababa, destroying four enemy aircraft and damaging others.

Home Front—Slight daylight enemy activity. Bombs fell at three places on coast of East Anglia. No night raids.

Greek War—Athens reported successful local operations. Capture of 250 prisoners and much war material.

FRIDAY, JAN. 24 *510th day*

On the Sea—Admiralty announced that H.M. submarine "Parthian" had sunk Italian supply ship south of Italy.

War against Italy—British troops in Libya continuing advance westwards. R.A.F. heavily raided Italian bases in Sicily.

In Eritrea Italians evacuated Keru and Aicota and were still in retreat.

Stated that Haile Selassie had arrived in Abyssinia from Khartoum to place himself at head of patriot army.

Home Front—Very little enemy activity in daylight. No night raids.

Greek War—Athens announced capture of new enemy positions and 200 prisoners.

Rumania—Gen. Antonescu succeeded in quelling Iron Guard revolt in Bucharest.

General—Lord Halifax was personally welcomed by President Roosevelt on arrival in U.S.A., having crossed Atlantic in battleship "King George V."

Marshal Pétain appointed advisory Council of nearly 200 members.

SATURDAY, JAN. 25 *511th day*

On the Sea—H.M. trawlers "Strathrannock," "Galvani" and "Philippe" engaged enemy aircraft and set it on fire.

In the Air—During night of 24-25 Coastal Command aircraft bombed submarine base at Lorient.

War against Italy—Advanced British elements reported to have been in contact with enemy 3 miles east of Derna. Column of enemy medium tanks engaged and dispersed.

R.A.F. bombed landing-ground at Maraua and aerodrome at Barce.

In Eritrea operations east of Keru and Aicota progressing satisfactorily. About 600 prisoners taken. Numerous supporting raids carried out by R.A.F.

East of Metemma (Abyssinia) pressure on enemy increased. Large portion of country now stated to be in hands of Patriots.

In Kenya ejection of enemy detachments from British side of frontier continued.

Home Front—Day activity by enemy aircraft was on small scale. Bombs fell at two points in East Anglia. During night bombs were dropped on a coastal town in Cornwall.

Greek War—Greeks forced Italians to withdraw their advanced outposts around key town of Tepelini to positions behind original lines. R.A.F. made successful attack on Boulsar, near Elbasan.

SUNDAY, JAN. 26 *512th day*

On the Sea—H.M. trawler "Galvani" was attacked by bomber which she so damaged that it crashed on Norfolk coast.

H.M.S. "Wallace" and H.M. drifters "Fisher Boy" and "Reids" were in action against enemy aircraft and destroyed at least two.

War against Italy—British troops in contact with enemy near Derna being reinforced.

In Eritrea, Biscia now in British hands. Operations proceeding in direction of Agordat. Enemy evacuated Umm Hagar.

R.A.F. bombed aerodrome at Barce and landing grounds at Derna and Apollonia. British fighters shot down five enemy aircraft.

Home Front—During day hostile aircraft dropped bomb on N.E. coast. At night enemy were reported near inland town in East Anglia.

Greek War—Italian counter-attacks foiled by Greek forces. Six enemy bombers destroyed, three over the front and three in flames at Salonika.

MONDAY, JAN. 27 *513th day*

In the Air—R.A.F. bombed Hanover in early hours of morning.

War against Italy—Operations in Derna area developing satisfactorily. Stated that prisoners taken at Tobruk number 25,000.

Marshal Graziani reported dismissed.

In Eritrea British forces closing in on enemy positions about Agordat and Barentu.

Further Patriot successes reported from interior of Abyssinia.

R.A.F. bombed railway stations at Keren and Aisha, 70 miles south-west of Jibuti, and railway bridge and road east of Adarti. Stores and warehouses at Assab also attacked.

Home Front—German 'plane shot down by A.A. fire at Boston, Lincs, after dropping bombs on one coastal town. Other reports of enemy activity came from East Midlands, N.E. England and E. Scotland.

Greek War—Further Italian counter-attacks repelled by Greeks. Fighting along entire front growing in intensity. Greeks attacked between Malina and Hondiste.